

https://www.wsmv.com/news/woman-says-she-paid-off-gangs-to-keep-son-safe-in-prison/article_a4e670ea-78be-5087-86e5-a65ecd485475.html

Woman says she paid off gangs to keep son safe in prison

REPORTED BY DEMETRIA KALODIMOS

POSTED OCT 5, 2017



Trousdale Turner Correctional Facility. (WSMV file photo)

The News 4 I-Team has heard from several families of inmates housed at Trousdale Turner Correctional Center who say they routinely pay “protection money” to make sure gang members don’t kill their loved ones.

One woman had receipts for the hundreds of dollars she said she has been paying regularly to keep her son safe from gangs.

She also claims to have someone inside “erase infractions” on his prison record.



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began calling almost immediately after arriving, claiming gangs had marked him as a target. The only thing that could keep him safe was money.

“I had to stop and pull over and send \$50 through Western Union today on my way here,” the woman told the I-Team. “Last week it was \$200, and that was supposed to be for protection from the other gangs beating him up. It just goes on and on.”

The mother said gang members appear to control everything, including movement to and from the showers. If protection isn’t paid, inmates are liable to be beaten, stabbed or worse. It’s called “shower security.”

James Middleton, who was recently released from Trousdale Turner, confirmed it and explained it.

“When an inmate comes up and whispers in your ear, ‘Me and my brothers are going to get you if you ever do this again,’ you don’t do it,” Middleton said.

Several times a week, sometimes several times a day, the mother has been sending money through Western Union to Memphis, Cordova and Nashville, often to the same names.

Sometimes anyone can pick it up without showing an ID. All they have to do is recite a pre-arranged question and answer.

It has pushed the woman to the financial and emotional breaking point.

“I can’t. I’m a disabled widow, and I actually have gone for Advance Financial, and that’s crazy. And now I have two full credit cards,” she said. “I don’t know who to call or who to get help from. You can hear the fear in his voice.”

But could it be more than just the gangs profiting from others?

The I-Team listened on the telephone as the woman's son described what needed to happen one day. Before 3 p.m., \$300 would allegedly get behavioral write-ups wiped off his record on the prison computer.

"Are we going to get it in time so they can pull it off the computer?" the woman asked.

An inmate liaison claimed he had made arrangements to pay someone on the CoreCivic staff to do it.

"There's a lot of write-ups, you know," the woman's son said. "If they get 10 people to pay them, then they're making money on it."

"How many times have you been beaten up by these people?" his mother asked.

"Four," her son replied.

The I-Team has spoken to several CoreCivic correctional officers who have questioned why write-ups they've submitted later seem to have disappeared from the official computer record.

They said even some perpetual troublemakers seem to have missing disciplinary write-ups when they pull up the computer data.

"I've had no hot water all summer. I've been taking cold showers," the mother said.

The woman said she will not take the chance that her son might die in prison, so she continues to pay regularly.

"I cried my eyes out for this last \$50," she said. "I just can't. I have to pay my bills this month."

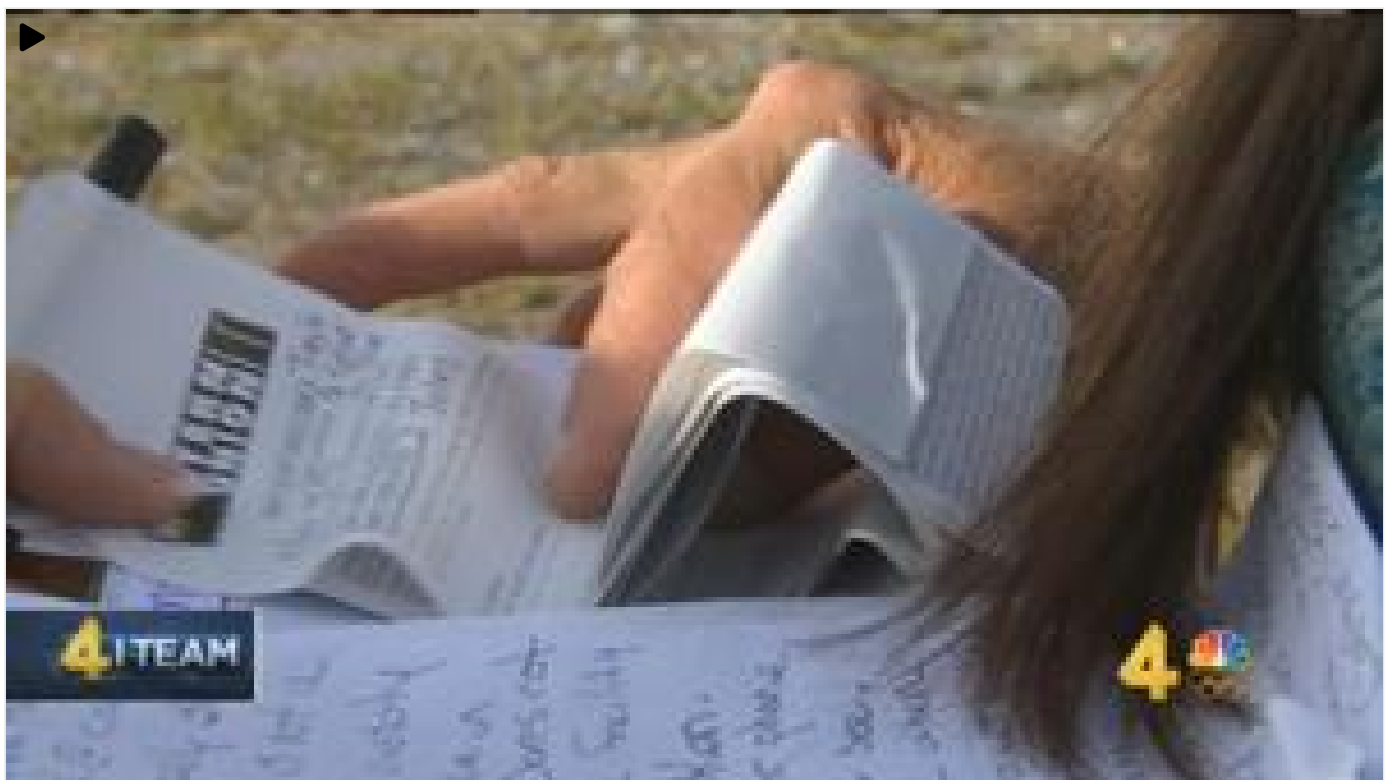
Days ago, the I-Team was contacted by another woman whose husband had died and left her with an insurance policy. She said gangs have now found out her son has an inheritance and are ordering her to send money through Walmart's cash delivery system.

The Tennessee Department of Correction issued the following statement concerning this report: Based on the information you provided which does not include any identifying factors, the Department of Correction is unable to confirm an investigation into the allegations. A key part of the Department of Correction's non-negotiable mission is to operate safe and secure prisons. The

Department encourages anyone with information about criminal activity involving our prisons to call our 24-hour tip line at 1-844-TDC-Find. All tips are investigated by the Department's Office of Investigation and Compliance and if criminal wrongdoing is found the information is forwarded to the District Attorney for prosecution. CoreCivic also issued a statement chastising News 4, despite the fact that we went straight to law enforcement: We weren't aware of these allegations. Although there are multiple means of anonymous and confidential reporting available to our employees, inmates and the public, we have no record of these issues being raised.

It's really unfortunate, too, because if we had known only a few details—details you don't even include below, we could have investigated this and, as needed, protected the affected individuals. If the person(s) who told you didn't feel comfortable coming to us, we wish that he/she/they had gone to TDOC. They have anonymous and confidential reporting systems, too. What you're describing, if true, suggests real people are in danger. Our not knowing more, and the state's not knowing more, prolonged and likely escalated any potential dangers. The I-Team shared names, confirmation numbers and currency transactions with the TBI. We have yet to hear what, if anything, has happened.

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NEWS

Woman says she paid off gangs to keep son safe in prison

Posted Oct 5, 2017

Case 1:17-cv-00093 Document 1-1 Filed 02/18/22 Page 4 of 11 Page ID #:425850

Over 1,200 staff, inmates test positive for COVID-19 at Trousdale Turner Correctional Center

JOSEPH WENZEL, DIGITAL CONTENT MANAGER

POSTED MAY 1, 2020



Trousdale Turner Correctional Center in Hartsville, TN, is operated by CoreCivic. (WSMV)

NASHVILLE, TN (WSMV) – More than 1,200 inmates and staff have tested positive for COVID-19 at Trousdale Turner Correctional Center, according to the Department of Correction.

TDOC confirmed 1,246 COVID-19 positive cases out of 2,450 total tests at the correctional center in Trousdale County. These positive tests come after a targeted testing event at the facility that started on April 28.

Following Friday's announcement, Gov. Bill Lee said there will be mass testing starting next week for all Tennessee Department of Correction staff and the inmates.

"Knowing the extent of the virus's spread within our correctional facilities is critical as incarcerated individuals remain one of the most vulnerable populations during this pandemic," Lee said in a statement on Friday. "Thanks to our increased capacity, we'll test all inmates and staff statewide in order to take appropriate actions to safeguard the health of these vulnerable individuals."

Unified Command Group Director Stuart McWhorter said they have been "in close coordination with TDOC" after the targeted testing of inmates and staff in early April.

"Given the increases in positive cases at the Bledsoe County and Trousdale Turner correctional facilities, despite the vast majority being asymptomatic, we are going to take the next steps in partnership with TDOC, Tennessee Department of Health, and Tennessee National Guard to support a broader testing strategy to promote the health and safety of staff and inmates. We will also coordinate plans with our local jails to assist them in safeguarding the health of their populations in the coming days," McWhorter said in a statement on Friday.

The analysis of those inmates and staff tested confirmed that 98 percent are asymptomatic.

Unified Command Group will work with the Tennessee Department of Health on the testing at the other 10 state-run facilities. Testing was done at Bledsoe County and Northwest Correctional Complexes on April 10, and at the Turney Center Industrial Complex on April 19.

Health officials said there were 583 positive staff and inmate cases out of the 2,322 tested. There were 40 positive cases out of 902 staff and inmates tested at Northwest. There were also 40 positive cases out of 313 staff and inmates tested at Turney Center.

Location	Number Tested	Number Positive	Number Negative	Pending
Bledsoe County Correctional Complex	2,322	583	1,703	36
Morgan County Correctional Complex	0	0	0	0
Northeast Correctional Complex	1	0	1	0
Lois M. DeBerry Special Needs Facility	5	0	5	0
Riverbend Maximum Security Institution	2	1	1	0
Tennessee Prison for Woman	5	0	4	1
Turney Center Industrial Complex	275	38	237	0
Turney Center Industrial Complex-Annex	38	2	36	1
Mart Luttrell Transition Center	2	1	1	0

Northwest Correctional Complex	902	40	843	19
West Tennessee State Penitentiary	1	0	1	0
Women's Therapeutic Residential Center	2	0	2	0
Contract & Private Managed prisons				
Hardeman County Correctional Facility	3	0	2	1
South Central Correctional Facility	2	0	1	1
Trousdale Turner Correctional Center	2,272	1,224	1,034	14
Whiteville Correctional Facility	2	0	2	0
Total	5,834	1,889	3,873	73

“The Department of Correction is taking a proactive approach to ensure all staff and the entire inmate population is tested for COVID-19,” TDOC Commissioner Tony Parker said in a statement on Friday. “Our sixth round of mass testing will begin early next week with the remaining 10 facilities conducting testing. With the support and leadership of Governor Lee, Tennessee is leading the nation in our approach to widespread mass testing.”

After positive COVID-19 tests, corrections officials said they follow with contact tracing for potential exposure.

The Department of Correction also delivered more than 93,000 masks for staff, inmates, county jails, and health care workers.

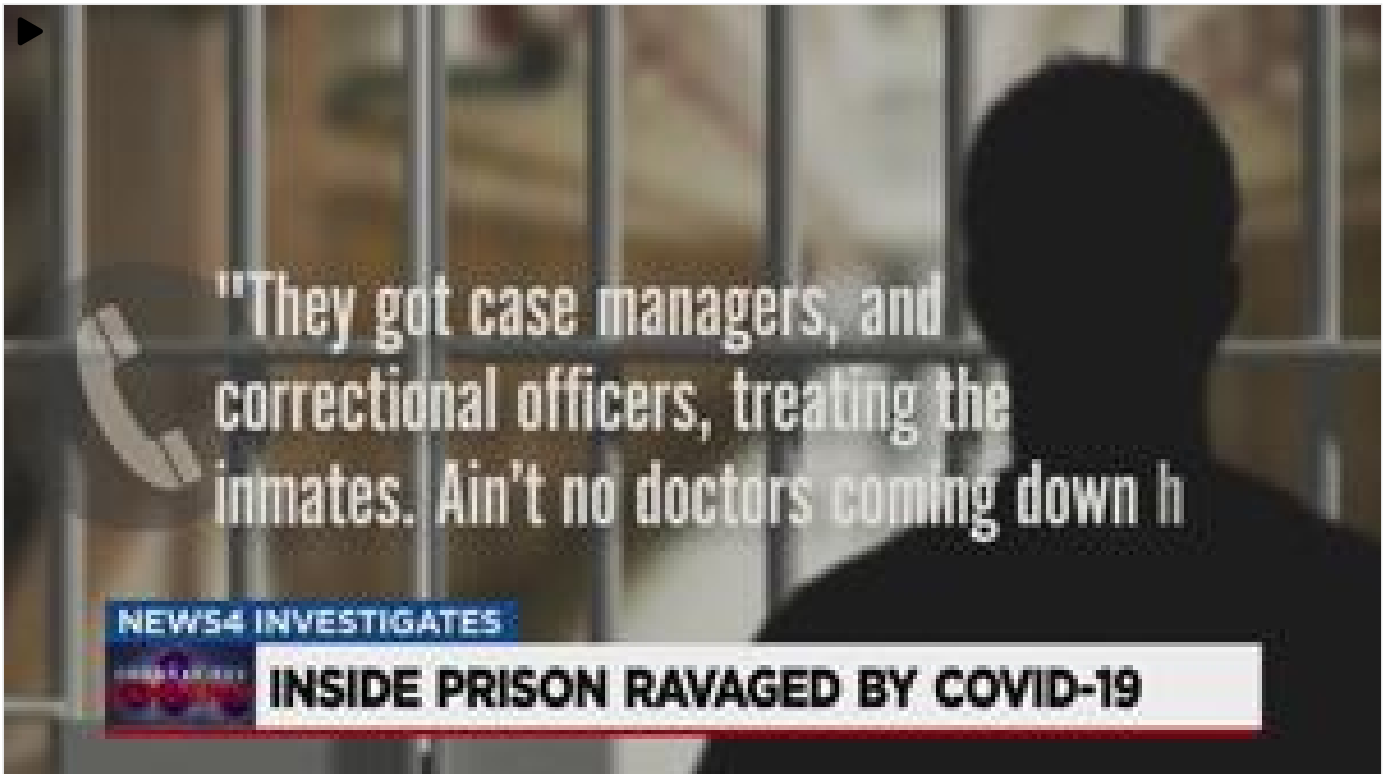
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Inmate at Trousdale Turner dies after testing positive for COVID-19



Recorded conversations reveal life inside prison ravaged by COVID-19



Almost 60 inmates positive for COVID-19 at Trowsdale Turner after second round of testing

MORE INFORMATION



580 inmates with COVID-19 at Bledsoe prison completed isolation

Joe Wenzel
Digital Content Manager

NEWS

Tennessee prison inmate dies after fight at Trousdale Turner

Adam Tamburin Nashville Tennessean

Published 9:41 a.m. CT Jan. 26, 2020 | Updated 4:45 p.m. CT Jan. 26, 2020

A Tennessee prison inmate died Saturday after a fight at Trousdale Turner Correctional Center in Hartsville.

Staff found inmate Frank Lundy injured "at the entrance to the housing unit" at about 12:45 p.m., according to a prison spokesperson. Lundy was taken to an area hospital where he was pronounced dead at 1:30 p.m.

Trousdale Turner remained on lock down Sunday, and officials with the Tennessee Department of Correction and the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation are looking into the death.

The alleged attacker, who the spokesperson would not identify, is in state custody and will be held in "restricted housing."

Lundy, 34, is listed on the state sex offender registry. Records show an offense of child molestation was logged against him in 2002.

Trousdale Turner is a state prison managed by private contractor CoreCivic. The troubled prison has been roiled by safety and staffing concerns since it opened in 2016.

A recent audit of state prisons found pervasive problems with staffing, training and oversight in Tennessee's public and privately run prisons.

Reach Adam Tamburin at 615-726-5986 and atamburin@tennessean.com. Follow him on Twitter @tamburintweets.

NEWS

New Tennessee CCA prison stops taking inmates amid 'serious issues'

Dave Boucher USA TODAY NETWORK - Tennessee

Published 3:59 p.m. CT May 24, 2016 | Updated 3:26 p.m. CT May 26, 2016

The newest private prison in Tennessee, set to eventually become the largest prison in the state, has abruptly stopped accepting inmates amid concerns about "serious issues" ranging from inadequate staffing and solitary confinement problems to allegations of excessive force.

Corrections Corporation of America spokesman Steve Owen confirmed Tuesday that CCA and the Tennessee Department of Correction agreed to "pause the ramp-up" at Trousdale Turner Correctional Center in Hartsville. The decision was made in early May, said department spokeswoman Alison Randgaard.

Although Owen made no reference as to why the decision was made, a report from The Associated Press cited a memo Tuesday that outlines concerns about understaffing that led to questions about whether officers were in control of their units.

In the memo, also obtained by The Tennessean, Correctional Administrator Tony Howerton says there are "serious issues" with leadership at the facility. He goes on to state officers were not in control of the housing units and put inmates in solitary confinement for no reason.

He also says he saw video that, in his opinion, shows officers using excessive force when trying to subdue an inmate.

"The inmate in my opinion was already compliant with the officers but he was sprayed with (pepper spray) and then struck three times with the pepper ball gun," Howerton writes.

Howerton says he contacted the department's internal affairs unit and requested an investigation. An investigator told Howerton an investigation would begin March 18.

"In my opinion it is at a minimum of unnecessary force but could be classified as excessive force."

In her statement, Randgaard said "growing pains are to be expected" at any new prison.

"Our partnership with CCA remains strong and we will continue to work together as we fulfill our non-negotiable mission of operating safe and secure prisons," Randgaard said.

CCA swaps wardens in Nashville, new state prison

In a statement to The Tennessean, Owen said as of Tuesday there are 319 employees at Trousdale Turner. That includes officers and all other CCA employees in addition to contracted medical and food services workers. However, on Thursday, Owen said the actual number of total employees at the prison is 281.

When the facility started accepting inmates in January, there were 157 employees, Owen said. In January, the prison initially housed 507 inmates, according to the department. As of April 30, the most recent count, the prison housed 1,706 inmates. Owen said the number of inmates has gone down since CCA stopped accepting new prisoners, due to inmates being released.

"We continue to work closely with our government partner on the timing and pace of further ramp-up of Trousdale. The top priorities guiding these decisions, for both the department and CCA, is safety and security. To that end, we are in the process of increasing staffing levels and conducting training necessary to support additional transfers of inmates to the facility," Owen said in a statement to The Tennessean.

For weeks, family members of inmates at Trousdale Turner have contacted The Tennessean with concerns about how their loved ones have been treated. Those family members have noted understaffing, saying their loved ones have been on "lockdown" — kept in their cells for up to 23 hours a day — for days on end. They've also complained about the solitary confinement practices and about inadequate medical treatment.

Shinar Hurd-Smith says her husband is incarcerated at the facility. She's said for weeks he's received inferior care for his respiratory issues.

"Overall I would like him to get his inhaler and any other medications in a timely manner. I would like for them to be correct as if they are not correct it can mean life or death for him with his severe asthma," Hurd-Smith said in an email Tuesday to The Tennessean.

Tennessee prison assaults soar under new definitions

Smith's concerns are some of many heard repeatedly by No Exceptions Prison Collective, an

Exceptions, said she hoped the decision to stop accepting inmates at Trousdale Turner would serve as a wake-up call to state lawmakers.

"For the past year employees and residents of Tennessee prisons have begged that something be done about current policies that are creating unsafe destabilized environments in Tennessee prisons, and about the inexcusable lack of medical care, programs, jobs, and lack of professionally trained security staff. At some point one has to seriously begin to question if an environment is intentionally being created to provoke riots," Alexander said in an email Tuesday to The Tennessean.

Within 90 days of opening the prison, then-warden Todd Thomas was removed from his position and sent to lead the Metro Nashville Detention Facility, the CCA jail operated on behalf of Metro. Then-jail warden Blair Leibach was sent to take over at Trousdale. CCA spokesman Jonathan Burns said at the time it was a logistical decision made in conjunction with "longer-term planning."

CCA has a five-year, \$276 million contract to operate the facility. Although state law essentially allows for only one private prison, the department is using Trousdale County as something of a pass-through: Trousdale pays the money to CCA after receiving the money from the state.

Reach Dave Boucher at 615-259-8892 and on Twitter @Dave_Boucher1.

This is a developing story. Check Tennessean.com for more information as it becomes available.

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BREAKING NEWS

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LONGFORM



Prisons for profit: Concerns mount about Trousdale Turner Correctional Center, operator CoreCivic

Posted: 1:53 PM, Jun 13, 2019 Updated: 3:56 PM, Jun 14, 2019





After spending more than a year inside Trousdale Turner Correctional Center in Hartsville, Tennessee, one inmate is speaking about the horror he says goes on behind the walls of this private, for-profit prison.



HARTSVILLE, Tenn. (WTVF) — Edwin Steakley has never denied he was guilty. From the moment he was first arrested on an aggravated robbery charge in 2012, Edwin knew he would end up paying the price.

But after spending more than a year inside Trousdale Turner Correctional Center in Hartsville, Tennessee, this 39-year-old man is speaking about the horror he says goes on behind the walls of this private, for-profit prison.

“When I close my eyes, I see a lot of pain. I have trouble sleeping, trouble eating. There’s just a lot of pain,” Edwin said, pausing between long deep breathes.

The deep anxiety this man was feeling, was evident with every word he struggled to speak.

“I was looked upon as a number, as a paycheck, that’s how I feel,” he said.



Edwin Steakley

Management of Trousdale is outsourced to the Nashville-based privately-run company CoreCivic. Of the 14 prisons the Tennessee Department of Corrections owns across the state only four are managed by CoreCivic.

Through a series of interviews with prisoners and family members of former prisoners, NewsChannel 5 spent months documenting why some state lawmakers say prisons for profit in Tennessee are not working.

Prior to his arrival at Trousdale Turner, Steakley was first housed in Morgan County. While there, he found out his mother had breast cancer and requested a transfer to Trousdale County, the same county he grew up in. From the time he arrived at the prison, he says he was preyed upon because of his Jewish faith.

“It was an atmosphere of a lot of tension. You’re constantly on lockdown 24/7. They would be understaffed, and guards would often have to work two shifts,” Steakley said.

That statement was largely substantiated by a [2017 audit performed by the Tennessee State Comptroller](#). The audit found Trousdale Turner had “unstaffed critical posts on several days,” detailed numerous instances when CoreCivic was in “noncompliance with contract requirements,” which impacted, “the department’s ability to effectively monitor the private prison.”

In a statement, emailed to NewsChannel 5, CoreCivic said they have addressed those concerns.

“Staffing was a challenge for several reasons,” spokeswoman Amanda Gilchrist said via email. “First, the Middle Tennessee labor market was very competitive, which made hiring a challenge for public and private facilities alike...In response, we strengthened our employee recruiting efforts at Trousdale Turner by significantly increasing wages and bonuses, which has already led to a 24% reduction in staff turnover from 2017.”

Edwin Steakley does not need a state audit to tell him about the issues at the CoreCivic facility.

He lived them first hand.

“My cellmate started making sexual remarks toward me, so I wrote out, I told case managers, the Sergeant on duty, I even told my mental health therapist and she said, ‘that’s how men talk,’” Steakley said as the color seemed to drain from his face.

Documents submitted to the Tennessee Department of Corrections show Steakley first reported his concerns about being raped on January 20, 2018. Then again on January 21, 22, 23 and 24 – no action was taken by either CoreCivic or TDOC officials.

Less than a month later, in the middle of the night on February 20th, Edwin Steakley was raped by his cellmate. Documents submitted to CoreCivic detail a horrifying rape in which Steakley was forced to perform oral sex on another man in the middle of the night, as a shank was held to his throat and his life was threatened.

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE
NASHVILLE DIVISION

EDWIN STEAKLEY,
Plaintiff,
v.

CASE NO. 3:19-mc-9999

CORECIVIC, INC., formerly known as
Corrections Corporation of America;
JEFFERY REEVES; RUSSELL WASHBURN,
in his individual and in his official capacity
as warden of Trousdale Turner
Correctional Facility; KEITH HUGGINS,
in his individual and in his official capacity
as chief of security of Trousdale Turner
Correctional Facility; HARLEY SILCOX,
in her individual and in her official
capacity as correctional sergeant at
Trousdale Turner Correctional Facility
Defendants.

COMPLAINT

1. Plaintiff Edwin Steakley, by and through counsel Daniel Ayoade Yoon, files this complaint under 42 U.S.C. 1983 and all other applicable state and federal law, naming as defendants CoreCivic, Inc., Jeffery Reeves, Warden Russell Washburn, Chief of Security Keith Huggins, and Sergeant Haley Silcox as violating his constitutional rights and for inflicting tortious injuries.

PARTIES

2. Plaintiff Edwin Steakley is a living, natural person and resident of Trousdale County, Tennessee.
3. Defendant CoreCivic, Inc., is a real estate investment trust, a Maryland corporation

“Do you know how that’ll make a person feel? To wake up to that?” Steakley said, breaking down into tears.

“He said, ‘suck my d--- or die.’ ” At this point, Edwin got up from the chair he as sitting in, unable to catch his breath. When he sat back down and composed himself, he continued, “Do you know how much courage it took for me to stand up? To even come forward and admit something like that?”

"Yeah, we all committed a crime, we're all guilty...We're still human, we still breathe the same air you breathe, we still have a heart that beats," he said, barely containing his tears.


While CoreCivic denied requests for an interview, they did address Steakley's alleged sexual assault:

"CoreCivic examined all reports of sexual abuse filed at Trousdale Turner while he was incarcerated there," Gilchrist said. "Mr. Steakley was found to have made one report, which was investigated, and the allegations were found to be unsubstantiated. No other reports of sexual abuse were filed by Mr. Steakley during his incarceration at Trousdale Turner."

Documents provided to NewsChannel 5 by Steakley's attorney, though, show he filed multiple grievances over the course of a month.

Steakley currently has a lawsuit pending against CoreCivic.

Attachment 3 *Att. Warden Wash Burn: Ht* page 5 of 12

 TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION
INMATE INQUIRY - INFORMATION REQUEST
TTCC
INSTITUTION

Edwin Steakley
INMATE NAME (Please Print)

312255
INMATE NUMBER

UNIT: *FA* ROOM / BED: *102* DATE: *1-23-18*

ROUTED TO: ☐ Unit Manager ☐ Inmate Relations Coordinator (IRC) ☐ Counselor ☐ Job Coordinator

1. Inmate Inquiry/Request:
Sir I have wrote C/M Jones and spoke with him, SGT Silcox wrote her and spoke to her, wrote my counselor, and nothing has been done about my cellie making sexual remarks and reaching like he is going to touch his pants, the hole time telling me he is going to make me such it.

2. Action by Counselor/IRC:

COUNSELOR/IRC SIGNATURE DATE

3. Action by Record Office:

RECORDS OFFICE STAFF SIGNATURE DATE

4. Sentence Management Service (SMS) Response:

Paying the ultimate price

It is hard to escape the sadness that seems to hang over the Anderson family home just outside of Chattanooga, Tennessee. Bill and Teresa Anderson have dealt with more than their fair share of grief over the last few years. Heartache, they say, that is only compounded because some of Tennessee's prisons are run for profit.

“It is morally and ethically wrong to be making a profit off of people in prison,” Teresa Anderson said.

All along the walls of Anderson's home are pictures of with picture of her children, including her son Ross Anderson. Ross ended up at Trousdale Turner Correctional Center back in 2017 after being convicted of killing his Rachael Johnson and her 5-year-old son Colton.



Bill, Ross, and Teresa Anderson

The horrific murder occurred just a few doors down from Ross's childhood home where his parents still live. “We will forever be the parents of a murder, forever, and there's no erasing that,” Teresa said as she clutched a picture of her son in her hands.

For years, the Anderson's say their son was dealing with a multitude of mental health issues from schizophrenia to severe depression. They do not make any excuses for the crimes their son committed nor are they looking for any kind of pity.

But what they do want, is to bring awareness to what they say are unsafe conditions inside of Trousdale Turner.

“There was no mental health care there, there was nothing. Our son is the face of everything that is wrong with the mental health system in this state and the prison system in this state,” Teresa said passionately.

Deep down, this mother says she knew that once her son was convicted and sent to prison, he was not going to make it out alive.

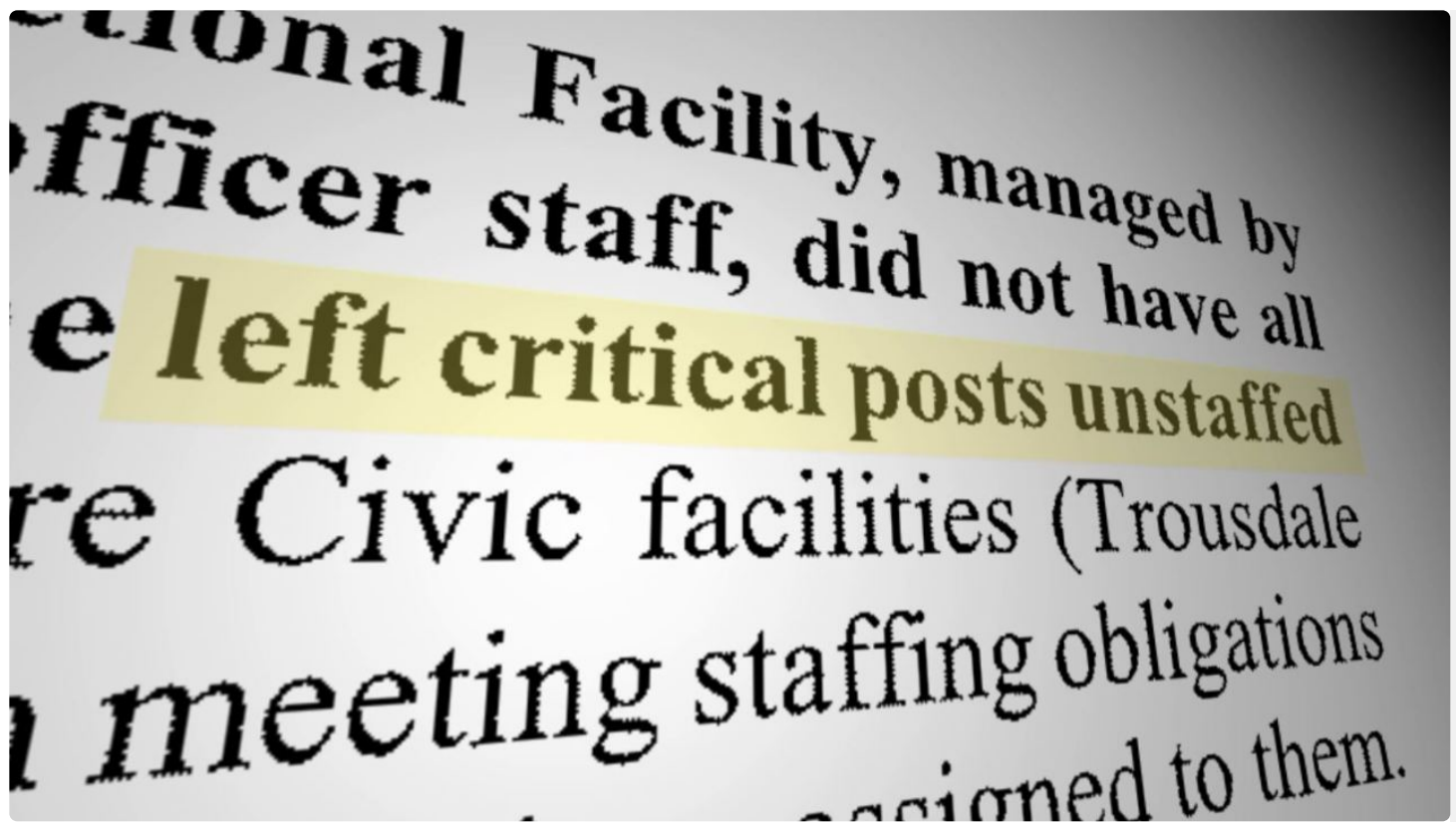
She was right. On December 6, 2018, inside of his cell at Trousdale Turner Correctional Center, Ross Anderson committed suicide. It was the third anniversary of his girlfriend’s murder.

The 34-year-old had hung himself with a pair of jeans.

“It happened on their watch. That’s what bothers me the most. I can’t stand my own thoughts some days, thinking about him dying in a place like that, alone where no one loved him or cared about it,” she said as teared rolled across her cheeks.

Both Teresa and Bill Anderson though say they believe their son would still likely be alive if Trousdale Turner was not managed by CoreCivic, a company which last year reported a total revenue of \$482 million dollars. “How can it be okay to make a profit off other people’s misery and mistakes?” Teresa said. “It’s immoral and unethical. ”

In response to Ross Anderson’s suicide, CoreCivic’s spokeswoman said, “When an incarcerated person takes their own life, the sense of loss reverberates through family members, fellow inmates and facility staff. Our government partners are immediately notified, and there is a full investigation of the circumstances surrounding the incident.”



A 2017 audit of Trousdale Turner Correctional Center found critical posts were left unstaffed among numerous other instances when CoreCivic was in "noncompliance with contract requirements"

Lawmakers question contract with CoreCivic

That 2017 audit found that the Trousdale facility had 66 documented incidents of noncompliance that resulted in CoreCivic being fined more than \$2.5 million. This year, the number was 26.

CoreCivic says they are constantly working to address issues at all four of their prisons in Tennessee.

"We've taken the challenges at Trousdale Turner very seriously, and we've worked hard to address them. The fact that the facility earned a 95% score on its most recent TDOC audit is a testament to that effort," Gilchrist said in response to questions submitted by NewsChannel 5.

Still though some lawmakers question why the state continues to pay CoreCivic millions of dollars a year when their track record is less than perfect.

The issue of resigning another contract with CoreCivic came to a tipping point at the state Capitol in December 2018. When asked whether the contract with CoreCivic should be ended, TDOC Commissioner Tony Parker said, “I have found the vendor, CoreCivic, they work well with us to try to correct these issues.”

Still, some lawmakers at that hearing seemed dissatisfied with the progress the company is making.

“We have to step up in my opinion,” Janice Bowling, a Republican Senator from Tullahoma, said.

Both Teresa and Bill Anderson were present at the hearing. Bill Anderson testified, detailing his son's suicide. Three minutes into that testimony, was cut off by Republican Chairman Mike Bell.

Bo Mitchell, a Democrat from Nashville, quickly shot back. “I’m done until someone in this committee wants to step up! We’re always in a hurry. We do nothing again, and again, and again, and we send these people home!” Rep. Mitchell said, his voiced raised nearly to the point of yelling.

In the end, CoreCivic’s contract was resigned. They will continue to manage four state facilities including Trousdale for the foreseeable future.

Read CoreCivic's full response to NewsChannel 5 below:

As we've acknowledged previously, there were challenges with bringing the Trousdale Turner Correctional Center up to full speed after its opening. Following the release of the Comptroller's performance audit in November 2017, CoreCivic worked closely with the Tennessee Department of Correction to address all findings through a comprehensive action plan. As a result:

- We improved performance on the 2018 follow up TDOC audit, with Trousdale Turner facility earning a 95 percent score – up significantly from 2017.
- Trousdale Turner also received 100 percent mandatory and 98.6 percent non-mandatory scores on our independent American Correctional Association (ACA) audit.

We appreciate the strong oversight by our government partners and remain committed to operating safe, secure facilities with high-quality reentry programming.

During the 2017 audit it was found the facility didn't have adequate staffing, I know that has been addressed, but why was that the case back then?

Staffing was a challenge for several reasons. First, the Middle Tennessee labor market was very competitive, which made hiring a challenge for public and private facilities alike. The local unemployment rate in Trousdale County was below 3%, which means we were trying to hire from a much tighter labor market than anticipated. Additionally, there was a significant lack of housing around the facility, forcing a number of our correctional officers to commute several hours to and from work and spend a significant amount of their income on gas.

In response, we strengthened our employee recruiting efforts at Trousdale Turner by significantly increasing wages and bonuses, which has already led to a 24% reduction in staff turnover from 2017. Trousdale Turner now has the highest correctional officer starting salary in the state – public or private. We also partnered with a local developer to incentivize the construction of housing options in Hartsville in order to expand the available pool of affordable, local units for Trousdale Turner employees.

We will continue to monitor and adjust recruitment and retention efforts as needed to ensure we remain an attractive option for job-seekers.

Do inmates receive any kind of mental or psychiatric care while at Turner?

A team of seven mental health professionals provide a full range of diagnostic and therapeutic services to the inmates at Trousdale Turner. When specific needs arise, additional outside professionals are used to augment the care given by the professionals in the facility. In addition to providing regularly scheduled mental health services, members of the team are on-call 24/7 to respond to mental health emergencies, including situations requiring an inmate to be placed on suicide watch.

Is CoreCivic doing anything to address the suicide of Ross Anderson?

When an incarcerated person takes their own life, the sense of loss reverberates through family members, fellow inmates and facility staff. Our government partners are immediately notified, and there is a full investigation of the circumstances surrounding the incident. In Mr. Anderson's



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NEWS



Scathing state audit slams Tennessee prisons, CoreCivic for staffing, sexual assaults, and deaths in jails

State audit reveals alarming details in TN prisons

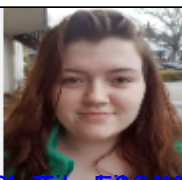
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Jaylynn Flowers

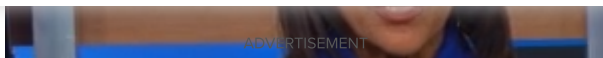
Jaylynn may travel to the state North Tennessee.

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Civic prisons across the state of Tennessee are still running at minimal staffing levels, in many cases leaving inmates susceptible to sexual assault.

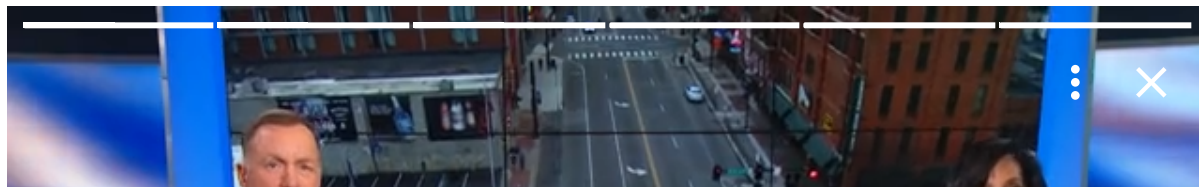


Posted at 12:36 PM, Jan 10, 2020 and last updated 7:19 PM, Jan 10, 2020

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (WTVF) — A scathing state audit released on Friday found that CoreCivic prisons across the state of Tennessee are still running at minimal staffing levels, in many cases meaning inmates suffering mental health issues aren't getting the help they need and creating questions surrounding the nearly 200 inmates who have died in state custody since 2017.

Every year the state pays the privately owned company millions of dollars to manage four prisons across the state of Tennessee.

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MUSIC TOUR GROUPS HURTING FROM PANDEMIC

Music industry workers hold out hope with pandemic creating uncertain future

Department of Corrections was released on Friday and tracked the department's performance from October 1, 2017 through July 31, 2019. In the last two years the audit found that 171 inmates have died while in state custody. 12 of those deaths were ruled suicide.

[Read the full 210-page audit here](#)

Over the course of the last two years the audit found that TDOC leadership failed to provide adequate oversight of correctional facilities which resulted in a failure to operate, "safe and secure prisons." In many cases CoreCivic officials were also blasted for not properly reporting vital data related to inmate deaths, inmate assaults, correction officer's use of force and facility lockdowns.

In recent years prisoner inside of CoreCivic run prisons owned by the state have come forward saying incidents of sexual assault were either ignored or not dealt with appropriately. In 2019 [NewsChannel 5 interviewed one inmate](#) who said he was raped inside of his jail cell because he was Jewish. Documents show that inmate reported his concerns to officials both prior to the incident happening and after it occurred, yet his claims were found to be unfounded.

Yet that audit said, "Three of the eight allegations... correctional facility staff

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An entire section of the audit is related to procedures that apparently aren't investigating sexual abuse and harassment. Inmates do not report being sexually assaulted, or because they do not believe that it will change anything.

At state prisons where showers were not monitored, that 171 inmates have died while in state custody. 12 of those deaths were ruled suicide.

Most alarming for families who have lost inmates to suicide inside of state facilities, the findings detail numerous incidents where correctional officials did not perform mental health checks in a timely manner.

Regularly, the audit found, inmates were walking away with their medications without waiting for a nurse to watch them swallow their pills even though state policy requires "face-to-face observation and monitoring by a qualified health professional of an inmate taking their medication."

The audit contained in all 18 findings that they say needed addressed. They identified several as "key findings"

- TDOC's leadership must improve its oversight in order to ensure compliance with laws, regulations and policies; provide safe and secure facilities; and reduce the risk to public safety.
- TDOC's annual inspection percentage scores of facilities do not provide a

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- TDOC should ensure that staff follow policies and procedures for harassment allegations.
al and mental health contractors met
allowed contractors to offset assessed
e contracts' authority.
rate that inmates are receiving sufficient
ices.
inue efforts to ensure adequate staffing in
e facilities. CoreCivic must also continue
making progress on the accuracy of its monthly staffing reports.
- Management must ensure staff perform inmate screenings within required timeframes. Management must also be sure inmates are aware of information and services the department provides.
- Although there has been improvement, the department has still not ensured adequate monitoring of individuals placed on parole or probation.
- The department has had difficulties in replacing its outdated information management system for offender data.
- Department management did not ensure that its staff and CoreCivic complied with public records regulations, resulting in lost records as well as potential evidence.
- The department has not reported recidivism rates for inmates who participated in educational and vocational programs, as required by statute.

These issues will be presented to the Joint Government Operations Subcommittee on Judiciary and Government on January 13th at 9 a.m.

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reentry programming, comprehensive healthcare, faith-based support and due to work closely with our partners at the n to ensure our administrative processes are insparency into our operations.

there were challenges with bringing the er up to full speed after its opening. We've ges we've faced, and while we still have work to do, we are making progress.

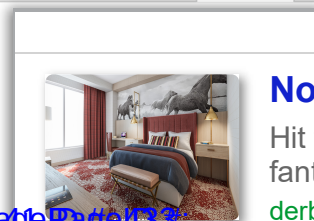
For example, we significantly increased pay to attract and retain employees, with the starting salary at Trousdale now more than \$16.50 per hour, which is the highest in the state for public or private facilities. We also offer immediate signing bonuses and relocation bonuses to make sure we're an attractive option in a competitive Tennessee labor market.

PREA Investigations

We are committed to the safety and dignity of every person entrusted to our care. We have a zero-tolerance policy for all forms of sexual abuse and sexual harassment. To ensure we are in full compliance with the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA), all staff receive pre-service and in-service education and training, and all inmates receive PREA education beginning at initial reception and continuing while they are with us. Anyone can report an allegation or suspected incident of sexual abuse or harassment, including inmates, staff or third parties. There are multiple options to report allegations including (but not limited to) calling the National Sexual Assault Hotline.

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All allegations of sexual misconduct are promptly, thoroughly and objectively investigated. They are tracked through an incident reporting database and reviewed within 72 hours. Allegations of sexual abuse that are criminal in nature are referred to the appropriate law enforcement agency (Tennessee Department of Correction's Office of Investigations and Compliance) for investigation and potential prosecution. All substantiated allegations of sexual abuse or sexual harassment result in the appropriate disciplinary actions and, where appropriate, referral for prosecution.

You can read more about CoreCivic's efforts to combat sexual abuse and harassment, including our annual PREA reports, here:
<http://www.corecivic.com/the-prison-rape-elimination-act-of-2003-prea>.

TDOC's commissioner gave the following statement:

The Department of Correction appreciates the work of the Comptroller's Office audit staff and the thoroughness of the report. We have already addressed, or are in the process of addressing the issues raised in the report which includes,

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safe and secure prisons and provides effective community supervision. The
outed to technology challenges, delayed
at our state, like many others, currently
that the department is certified by the
compliance, fully accredited by the American
of our processes and protocols exceed
the department recognizes and is committed
cedures as well as enhancing our own
recommended by the Comptroller that will help
the TDOC be a better and more efficient department.

We recognize and appreciate that the State's external auditing function brings valuable, third-party insight. Like other law enforcement agencies, our employees work extremely hard, day in and day out, to protect the public while facing increasingly difficult challenges. We will address the specific findings during Monday's hearing.

The citizens of Tennessee can rest assured that the Tennessee Department of Correction will not compromise public safety and will do everything within our power to ensure that the public, our employees, and the offenders under our supervision are protected.

To read more of Chris' reporting on Tennessee's prison for profit system, click [here](#)

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MONEY

CoreCivic shareholders gain class action status in securities fraud lawsuit against private prisons company

Jamie McGee The Tennessean

Published 3:56 p.m. CT Mar. 27, 2019 | Updated 4:21 p.m. CT Mar. 27, 2019

A federal judge has granted class action status to shareholders suing Nashville-based CoreCivic for securities fraud in a lawsuit that reveals new details about the company's operations and staffing issues.

The lawsuit, filed in August 2016 against the company and four executives, alleges CoreCivic, formerly named Corrections Corp. of America, made false and misleading statements about its operations related to safety, security and effectiveness and committed securities fraud violations.

In an order filed Tuesday in U.S. District Court of Middle Tennessee, Judge Aleta Trauger granted the lawsuit class action status. Trauger had denied the status in January, and the plaintiffs subsequently filed a motion for reconsideration and submitted new evidence.

Among the executives named in the lawsuit are CEO Damon Hininger, David Garfinkle, Todd Millenger and Harley Lappin.

CoreCivic said it does not comment on active litigation.

The lawsuit concerns an announcement made Aug. 18, 2016, that the U.S. Department of Justice would phase out contracts with private prison operators. Then-Deputy Attorney General Sally Q. Yates had instructed the Bureau of Prisons to end or reduce contracts with privately run prisons and cited concerns about safety and security in privately run facilities outlined in a separate report from the Office of the Inspector General.

The OIG report said that privately run prisons had more safety and security incidents per capita than those run by the bureau of prisons and that CoreCivic prisons had the highest rates of fights and inmate-on-inmate assaults.

After Yates' announcement, CoreCivic shares tumbled by 39 percent, and shareholders suffered financial losses because of the company's acts and omissions, the shareholders allege.

Hininger in March 2016 told shareholders that its facilities "meets the needs of our government partners" and that the company has a "strong record of operational excellence," according to the new order. The order also referred to other company reports in which the company claimed to be compliant with government standards.

The order says the BOP regularly notified CoreCivic about "inadequate staffing and its failure to provide sufficient medical services to its inmates." In 2015, the BOP said unless conditions related to health services are cured, the government may terminate its contract.

In October 2015, according to the order, a CoreCivic executive wrote in an email to Hininger, "apparently we had a bad day today with BOP medical audit at Cibola," a detention center in New Mexico. Another email said the matter "is going to kill us at both Cibola and Eden," a facility in Texas. In June 2016, as the BOP reviewed medical services at Cibola County Correctional Center, an executive wrote, "We're dead."

That same month, Hininger said at an investor forum, "We have operationally made sure that we are providing high quality and standard and consistent services to our partners."

When CoreCivic employees were given an advance version of the 2016 OIG report, an executive wrote, "What I'm shocked over is they totally overlooked the consequences of our staff vacancies. They mentioned staffing at the end but could have been much more critical," according to the order.

In a separate order filed in December 2017 that denies CoreCivic's motion to dismiss, an affidavit by a correctional officer describes a 2012 incident that resulted in the death of another employee at a CoreCivic prison in Mississippi. The correctional officer said she was instructed to climb onto a roof after being warned about inmates planning "something big" and to eventually deploy gas canisters at inmates climbing a ladder to the roof, according to the court filing, citing the affidavit. The inmates threw the canisters back at two staff members, along with garbage cans and rocks before beating a staff member with a metal pan and food tray. That correctional officer said after she gained consciousness, she saw the other staff member lying motionless on the roof.

She and her coworkers had told Corecivic officials on numerous occasions that they lacked the staff needed to control inmates and the shortage created a dangerous environment. She

said she was told to "put my big girl panties on and get back to work," according to the order, citing the affidavit.

The BOP sent CoreCivic several notices about staffing shortages and health services deficiencies at the Mississippi facility and a separate facility, Cibola, in New Mexico, according to the 2017 court filing. "Unsatisfactory" reviews were given to both sites. The company's Eden Detention Center in Texas received notices related to health services deficiencies and the BOP said its response to tuberculosis had been "inadequate."

Reach Jamie McGee at 615-259-8071 and on Twitter @JamieMcGee_.

https://www.lebanondemocrat.com/hartsville/family-seeks-answers-in-loved-ones-death-at-trousdale-prison/article_1ffe90f7-0e9f-5021-bb94-9ec1b4d23139.html

Family seeks answers in loved one's death at Trousdale prison

By Chris Gregory cgregory@hartsvillevidette.com

Jan 2, 2021



Aaron Blayke Adams

Submitted

Family members of an inmate at Trousdale Turner Correctional Center are demanding an investigation into what they called a murder inside the facility last month.

CoreCivic, which owns the Hartsville prison, confirmed the death in a press statement by Public Affairs Manager Ryan Gustin.

"At approximately 2:07 a.m. (CST) on Thursday, December 17, Trousdale Turner Correctional Center staff discovered an unresponsive inmate. Staff immediately called a medical emergency. Facility medical staff immediately responded and begin administering emergency first aid and life-saving procedures. EMS responded to the facility, but the inmate passed away prior to being transported.

"Facility administrators notified the Tennessee Department of Correction's (TDOC) Office of Investigations and Conduct (OIC). A full investigation of the incident by the TDOC OIC is underway, and Trousdale Turner staff are cooperating fully," the statement read.

CoreCivic declined to identify the inmate, citing privacy requirements and referred all other inquiries to TDOC. A letter sent to media outlets, TTCC Warden Raymond Byrd, TDOC offices and to the District Attorney's office by the inmate's family identified him as Aaron Blayke Adams, 29. Tennessee's TOMIS inmate identification system also lists Adams as 'deceased.'

"He was murdered at Trousdale Turner," Deborah Henson, Adams' grandmother, said. "He was in protective custody because he was due to be released."

CoreCivic would not confirm whether Adams had been in protective custody or was scheduled for release.

The letter claims that Adams "obtained broken bones and blunt force trauma, to his face and head, along with multiple bruising throughout his body," and Henson added that the funeral home had to reconstruct Adams' head while preparing the body for memorial services.

"It has been devastating to know that he was beaten so badly they had to recap his head and build up his lower jaw just so we could have an open casket," she said.

The family's letter alleges that Adams was killed by "a menace to society... who was already serving time for murdering his own father."

"CoreCivic had a duty but failed to protect our beloved Blayke," the letter states. "Every inmate in their care should be treated humanely and safely secured while in their care. Blayke was not safe, and lost his life, due to the gross negligence of this facility."

CoreCivic declined to identify the alleged party responsible for the death and the claim could not be confirmed at press time. The District Attorney's office was closed for the New Year holiday and also could not be reached for comment at press time.

Inmates at CoreCivic prisons say they sometimes go months without medical care

REPORTED BY DEMETRIA KALODIMOS

POSTED JUN 22, 2017



Department of Corrections officials are reporting another death at Trousdale Turner Correctional Facility after an inmate has tested positive for COVID-19.

Octavious Taylor has a painful and incurable disease. It's a bad combination when you're locked up in prison.

Taylor's fiancée, Larita Dowlen, said when he was transferred from a state-run facility to the privately run Trousdale Turner Correctional Center, he stopped getting his medicine for sickle cell anemia.

"He catches infections really easily. It gets to the point sometimes where he can't even get out of bed. Excruciating pain," Dowlen said.

Taylor documented a recent health crisis minute-by-minute in a grievance report.

Over a 24-hour period, Taylor claims he repeatedly asked to see a medical professional for pain. The report says he was refused more than once, told the staff was too busy, and told "unless he was bleeding or dying, it was not a medical emergency."

When he finally saw a nurse 24 hours later, he got hot compresses and ibuprofen, nothing more.

"I'm actually afraid he's going to die one day in that prison because they don't give him the medical help he needs," Dowlen said.

"No, it doesn't surprise me," said Jeannie Alexander, an advocate with No Exceptions. "I mean we've received stories of broken bones that are never set, stories of individuals with sickle cell, patients who can't get their medication. Of course with Trousdale, we have the recent suit brought by prisoners with diabetes who can't get their insulin shot.

The suit demands that all diabetics be transferred at once to a non-CoreCivic prison in Tennessee with adequate medical staff.

"Why do you want to spend money on health care? The point is to spend as little as possible to confine these people, and that's the name of the game," Alexander said.

But what happened at another CoreCivic prison in Tennessee may up the ante altogether.

The details are spelled out in two separate, but similar, letters from inmates. One of them also called Channel 4.

"I wrote you about Chris, you know, about him cutting his testicles off?" the inmate said.

The letter said that on the night of March 21, 2017, Christopher Hall decided the pain he was suffering was so unbearable, he had to do something of his own.

"He kept for four months trying to get medical treatment for them, and he showed them to me," the caller said. "They had swelled up, looked like a softball, and they was blue.

"He was just in so much pain. And like I said, they was swelled up like 10 times bigger than they should have been," he added.

The letter says, "Mr. Hall decided he couldn't bear the pain any longer."

Hall told the Channel 4 I-Team what he did and why.

"I asked him how long to see a doctor. They told me a couple weeks," Hall said. "I put in a sick call. They never called me. I wait and I wait and I wait. This is the last straw, I'm hurting so bad in my belly.

"I've been trying to see a doctor for over five months. I just broke me a razor out, went up there and got me some thread, went in the shower, shaved a little bit and popped her out," Hall said.

"He cut his testicles out, put them in a cup, and then took them to the nurse and handed them to her and told her, 'Here you go. Now you ain't got to worry about doing nothing,'" the caller said.

Hall was bleeding so bad they couldn't get the bleeding to stop.

"And they took him to Nashville and everything, but they was trying to keep it quiet here and everything," the inmate said.

"They had me on psych ward lockdown. ... They thought I was crazy, I hurt myself. I said I didn't hurt myself, I relieved myself. I've been trying to see a doctor for five months," Hall said.

"And they was saying he was suicidal and all that is what they're blaming it on. Anybody's going to kill themselves, you know, they're not going to do that," the inmate said.

This happened at South Central Correctional Facility.

"What the hell is going on?" Alexander asked. "There will be a time when this state will be ashamed at what's happened behind prison walls.

"Let journalists in. Let politicians in. Let people go inside and freely speak. Believe your staff. Believe the prisoners who are housed in your facility. Start paying attention," she added.

“This is the problem with the privatization of prisons, because no longer are you dealing with human lives. The humanitarian issue doesn’t matter, because who does the fiduciary duty run to? The stockholders, not the state, not the communities, not the citizens, not the staff. It’s stockholders.”

After learning of this incident, the I-Team reached out to CoreCivic. Our specific inquiry about this mutilation, made months ago, has yet to be addressed.

Many families have asked the I-Team what they can do to bring their complaints and concerns to light.

CoreCivic is under contract by the state. Taxpayers are sending millions to the firm to provide services to incarcerated Tennesseans. The governor and lawmakers approved the deal.

CoreCivic’s contract in Trousdale County isn’t set to expire until 2018.

WSMV-TV Channel 4, Nashville

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NEWS

Inmates at CoreCivic prisons say they sometimes go months without medical care

Posted Jun 22, 2017

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✿ (/subscribe/digital/) Incorrect Cause of Tennessee Prisoner's Death Reported by CoreCivic Employees

Loaded on JUNE 7, 2018 published in Prison Legal News June, 2018 (/news/issue/29/6/), page 34

Filed under: Corrections Corporation of America/CoreCivic (/search/?

selected_facets=tags:Corrections%20Corporation%20of%20America/CoreCivic), Contractor Misconduct (/search/?

selected_facets=tags:Contractor%20Misconduct), Drug Overdose (/search/?selected_facets=tags:Drug%20Overdose),

Statistics/Trends (/search/?selected_facets=tags:Statistics/Trends), Wrongful Death (/search/?

selected_facets=tags:Wrongful%20Death). Location: Tennessee (/search/?selected_facets=locations:1517).

According to the Tennessee Department of Correction (TDOC), state prisoner Edward Ray Gilley, Jr., 54, died on November 5, 2016 at the Trousdale Turner Correctional Center, a facility owned and operated by CoreCivic – previously known as Corrections Corporation of America.

In response to a public records request filed by Prison Legal News, on February 13, 2018 the TDOC's director of communication, Neysa Taylor, reported that Gilley's death was due to "natural causes."

Unless overdosing on meth is "natural," however, that cause of death was incorrect – though it evidently was not scrutinized or questioned by TDOC officials.

A previous news report by WSMV Channel 4 in Nashville indicated that Gilley had died of an overdose, though he wasn't mentioned by name in the report. PLN obtained a copy of the autopsy results from the medical examiner's office, which concluded that Gilley's death was caused by "toxic effects of methamphetamine complicating hypertensive cardiovascular disease." The report noted that a toxicology screen was "significant for methamphetamine" at almost four times the reporting threshold, and the cause of death was ruled accidental – as in an accidental overdose.

It was not listed as due to natural causes.

Yet "natural causes" was the entry made by CoreCivic employees Lt. Julie Englebrecht and Beverly Atwood, an administrative assistant to Trousdale's warden, according to records produced by the TDOC pursuant to another public records request filed by PLN.

Gilley's sister, Diana, said prison officials at Trousdale falsely informed her that her brother had died of a "massive heart attack."

"It was an overdose, an overdose of meth in this facility," his sister told WSMV. "Words cannot express the shock we have on so many levels that this could even possibl[y] be anything that would be considered in a state correctional center. Unbelievable. How he got it, where he got it. Was it manufactured in there? Who supplied him with this? It's beyond anybody's comprehension how this could happen."

CoreCivic's Trousdale prison has been plagued with problems since it opened in 2016, including understaffing, complaints about inadequate medical care, a suicide, and high levels of violence and gang activity. [See: PLN, Feb. 2018, p.46]. There have been at least nine prisoner deaths, including Gilley's, from 2016 through March 2018.

This was not the first time that CoreCivic incorrectly reported a prisoner's cause of death. When Estelle Richardson, a mother of two, died at the CCA-operated Metro-Davidson County Detention Facility in Nashville on July 5, 2004, the company recorded her death as being due to "natural causes" in an internally-compiled list of incidents provided to Florida officials as part of a contract bid.

In fact, the medical examiner had determined Estelle's death was a homicide.

On April 16, 2018, PLN managing editor Alex Friedmann provided public testimony before the state House Government Operations Committee. He raised the issue of Gilley's death being incorrectly reported by CoreCivic as due to "natural causes," noting that the company's employees had an incentive not to disclose adverse incidents such as overdoses – which would raise questions about how the drugs were obtained, how they were brought into the facility and whether the company had conducted an investigation.

"We have a problem with CoreCivic misrepresenting the cause of death of a prisoner, and we have a problem with the Tennessee Department of Correction accepting that information, apparently without question, and disseminating it to the public even though it conflicts with the medical examiner's report, which indicates a lack of oversight, a lack of monitoring," Friedmann told the legislative committee.

During the same hearing, TDOC Commissioner Tony Parker responded to that issue. With respect to a prisoner's overdose death, he stated, "it could appear to be a natural death depending on the circumstances ...," and noted it takes months to get autopsy results that list the official cause of death. "It is possible for a death to be assumed or listed as ... a natural cause [of] death, but after you get the reports back and other evidence comes forth, it can be changed," Parker said. He added that the TDOC had taken recent steps to improve oversight at Trousdale, including assigning additional contract monitors and imposing fines against CoreCivic.

However, in the case of Gilley, the autopsy report that determined his death was caused by a meth overdose was completed by the medical examiner in December 2016, yet the TDOC was still stating that he had died of "natural causes" in February 2018 – indicating the incorrect cause of death reported by CoreCivic had not been reviewed or changed by state prison officials in over 14 months.

Sources: www.wsmv.com, TDOC public records requests, www.legislature.state.tn.us

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LOCAL

Private prison company CoreCivic's history of issues in Tennessee

Staff reports

Published 10:00 p.m. CT Jan. 16, 2020 | Updated 10:28 p.m. CT Jan. 16, 2020

CoreCivic is one of the nation's largest private prison firms. In Tennessee, it runs four state prisons and several county detention centers, housing about a third of the state's roughly 30,000 inmates.

But the company has faced scrutiny for a number of problems at its facilities, including criticism from state leaders, local politicians and the public. Here is an overview of some of the recent issues that put CoreCivic in the headlines.

Audits: Mishandled abuse claims, gang activity, staffing shortages

CoreCivic was named in an audit released earlier this month, which detailed the Tennessee Department of Correction's failure to properly classify inmate deaths and mishandling of sexual abuse claims.

Health staff at two CoreCivic facilities — Whiteville Correctional Facility and Trousdale Turner Correctional Center — did not record any serious accidents or injuries in a state database during the one-and-a-half-year audit period, an "unlikely" absence of such incidents, the audit said. Allegations of sexual abuse and harassment were also filed 10 days late at Whiteville and Trousdale Turner, according to the audit.

For subscribers: Nashville considers ending contracts with private prison companies. But can the city afford it?

It wasn't the first time the company had been the subject of a critical review. A 2017 state audit cited gang activity and staffing shortages at Trousdale Turner as evidence of CoreCivic's "continued noncompliance with contract requirements and department policies" while

managing the prison. CoreCivic later acknowledged it had been fined more than \$2 million by the state for issues related to the 2017 audit.

A spokesperson for CoreCivic said the company was "committed to providing a high standard of care for every person in our Tennessee facilities."

Problems at Trousdale Turner

The Trousdale Turner Correctional Center has been among CoreCivic's most troubled facilities in Tennessee. The company has a five-year, \$276-million deal to run the a 2,552-bed prison in Hartsville.

In 2016, Trousdale Turner abruptly stopped accepting new inmates amid concerns about "serious issues" at the prison, including inadequate staffing, solitary confinement problems and allegations of excessive force. The Tennessean reported that year that 306 jobs were unfilled at the state's four CoreCivic-operated prisons, representing an 18.6% vacancy rate.

In 2018, state lawmakers heard testimony from a former Trousdale Turner inmate who said he was raped twice while incarcerated there, and that nothing was done when he attempted to report it. Testimony from the parents of another former inmate blamed a lack of staffing and oversight for their son's suicide at the prison.

A spokesperson for CoreCivic later said the company has boosted pay and recruitment efforts to improve staffing at Trousdale Turner, and said CoreCivic makes extensive efforts to prevent and address sexual assault.

Sexual harassment, diabetes lawsuits

CoreCivic has also faced lawsuits in Tennessee from both inmates and former employees.

A female guard at a Chattanooga prison run by CoreCivic said she was repeatedly required to work alone with male inmates who sexually harassed, groped and attacked her, according to a federal lawsuit filed in 2019. Coworkers repeatedly ignored the guard's calls for help and shrugged off her reports of harassment, according to the suit, with a supervisor telling her to "grow a tougher skin."

Multiple lawsuits also claimed that diabetic inmates were denied timely access insulin or other necessary medical care. CoreCivic has denied wrongdoing in those suits and said it is committed to "high-quality health care" for inmates.

Scabies outbreak

In 2017, an outbreak of scabies at the CoreCivic-run Metro-Davidson County Detention Facility spread the infestation to hundreds of inmates and staffers. A lawsuit filed by employees at the jail alleged that they faced retaliation if they spoke out about the problem, which echoed a lawsuit on behalf of inmates that claimed they would be placed in solitary confinement if they discussed scabies.

Later that year, a CoreCivic guard was arrested and pleaded guilty to misdemeanor assault for pepper spraying an inmate without justification. The inmate, James Nelson, alleged that corrections officer Oluwatobi Ola attacked him because he was considering filing a lawsuit against CoreCivic over a scabies infection. CoreCivic fired Ola.

CoreCivic did not admit wrongdoing in the scabies outbreak, but did pay medical expenses for some Metro employees. CoreCivic CEO Damon Hininger said jail employees "have followed the standard of care and accepted protocols in correctional health care for managing these types of situations."



CoreCivic

PRISON
MANAGEMENT

© NOV 14, 2017

State audit criticizes CoreCivic facilities

Private prisons had staffing, management problems

AUTHORS Stephen Elliott

Two state prisons run by Nashville-based CoreCivic were mismanaged and understaffed, according to a performance audit released Tuesday by the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury's office.

The two facilities — Trousdale Turner Correctional Center (pictured) and Hardeman County-based Whiteville Correctional Facility — did not follow state-approved staffing plans. Additionally, the audit found that Trousdale Turner's management was in "continued noncompliance with contract requirements and department policies."

The Trousdale prison, which opened in January 2016, has been plagued with problems from the start. It stopped taking new prisoners in May because of "growing pains," the Associated Press reported, including trouble staffing the facility.

Other issues have been documented at the Trousdale facility. Inmates filed a federal lawsuit in February claiming that understaffing there had resulted in subpar care for diabetics, and families of inmates wrote in a letter that they were "deeply concerned" about the treatment of inmates there.

Facility management responded to the audit by citing pay increases and signing bonuses offered by CoreCivic, formerly known as Corrections Corporation of America, as a way to attract correctional staff.

"Trousdale Turner Correctional Center is a relatively new facility that has been operating for less than two years," Tennessee Department of Corrections management wrote in response to the audit findings. "As such, considerable oversight has been required. ... Many noncompliance issued have been documented on the contract monitoring reports, annual audits, and quarterly medical and mental health audits."

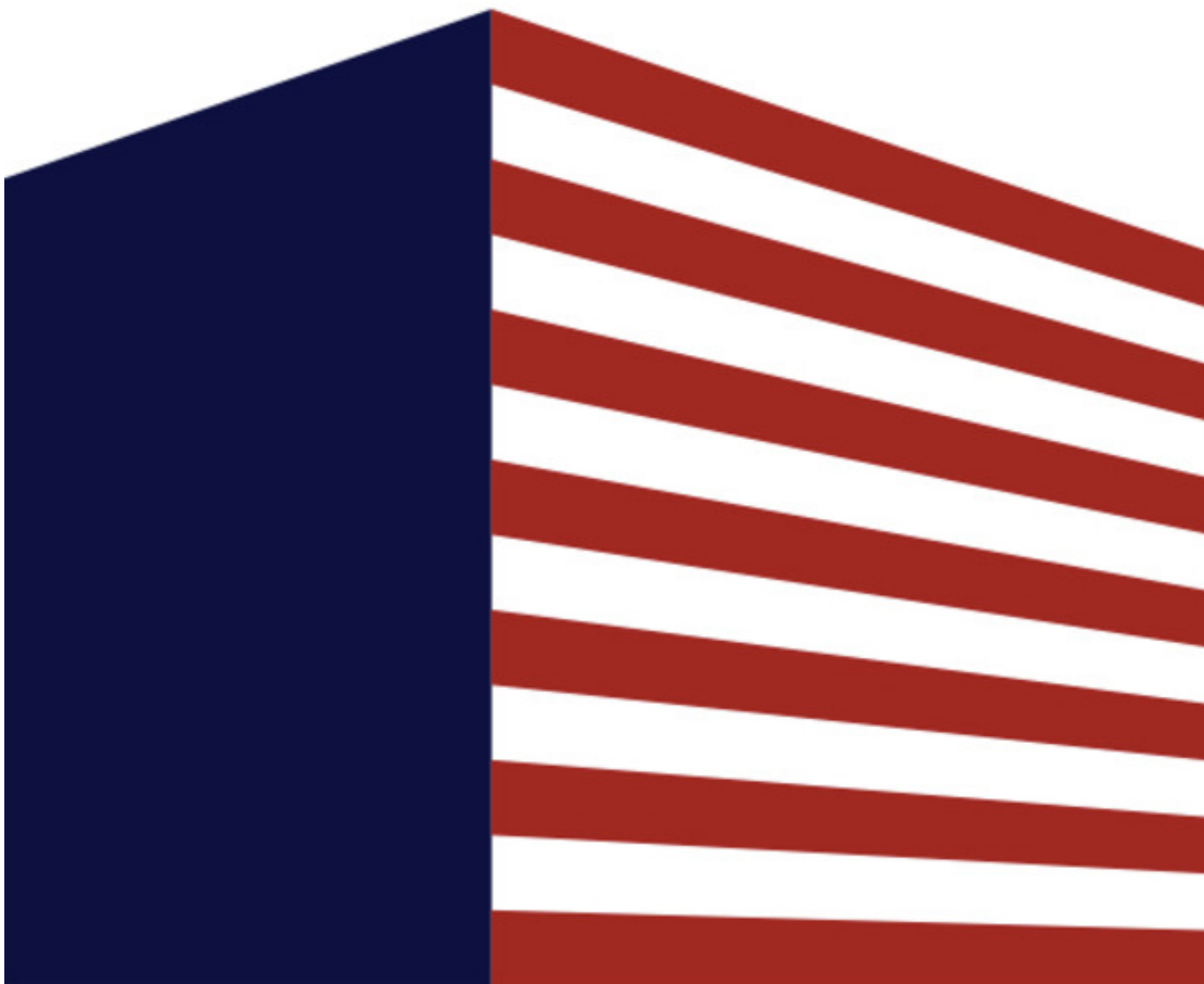
CoreCivic stock was trading nearly 5 percentage points down Tuesday afternoon.

CORECIVIC INC. TENNESSEE COMPTROLLER OF THE TREASURY TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

CoreCivic reports \$25M in profits as COVID infects 2,500+ inmates

Facilities' population fell only 3% from March to April

AUTHORS Matt Blois



The coronavirus pandemic sent an intense wave of disruption through the prison system in the spring. Local jails emptied out and prison operators tried to implement social distancing rules to prevent the spread of the virus.

Despite those efforts, at least 75,000 inmates have been infected and more than 600 have died in the United States so far, according to reporting from The New York Times. Most of the country's biggest coronavirus clusters have occurred in jails and prisons.

With more than 70 correctional and residential re-entry facilities across the country, and an average inmate population of about 56,000 during the height of the pandemic, Brentwood-based private prison operator CoreCivic finds itself at the center of that problem. More 1,300 inmates at the company's Trousedale Turner Correctional Center

in Hartsville have tested positive for COVID-19 and three have died. Nearly 400 inmates tested positive for the disease at other CoreCivic locations in Tennessee.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, CoreCivic's largest client, has reported nearly 700 cases of COVID-19 and two deaths in CoreCivic facilities. Colorado, Georgia and Ohio have reported a total of 124 COVID-19 cases and one death at CoreCivic prisons.

In total, more than 2,500 inmates have tested positive for the disease at CoreCivic facilities. Large outbreaks have occurred in many government operated prisons as well. So far, the vast majority of those cases have been asymptomatic.

CoreCivic has been screening inmates and staff for COVID-19 symptoms and encouraging hand washing, basic hygiene and social distancing. However, inmates and criminal justice advocates argue those basic measures won't keep people healthy in crowded prisons and that the best solution is to dramatically decrease inmate populations.

While the virus has infected thousands of people at CoreCivic facilities, the Brentwood company still reported \$25 million in profits during April and May. (The company in 2019 produced an average of \$15.7 million in net income per month.) Amid the uncertainty, the company isn't issuing financial predictions about the rest of the year, but executives are expressing confidence that the effects of the virus on the bottom line will be temporary.

In a statement, a representative from CoreCivic said the company is working hard to protect staff and inmates from the virus. That includes checking employees and inmates for symptoms, encouraging social distancing through "regular town hall meetings, posted flyers, information presented over the closed circuit television system, and the routine instruction of staff." The company says it's also cleaning frequently touched surfaces.

CoreCivic is limiting movement of inmates to reduce contact with other people. Inmates arriving at a new facility are quarantined for 14 days in a holding area, and people at high risk of becoming severely ill are separated from the general population.

In some places, the company is also conducting mass testing to identify sick inmates, but many inmates still haven't been tested. CoreCivic is following the direction of government clients when it comes to large testing campaigns.

Tennessee set a goal of testing all inmates. Other clients haven't asked for the same level of testing. ICE has tested about half of its detainee population. Colorado has tested about a quarter of its population and Arizona has only tested 8 percent of inmates. That means some infected prisoners may not have been tested yet.

On a conference call last month, CoreCivic executives argued that the company's facilities, which are often larger and more modern than state run prisons, make it easier to keep inmates healthy.

"When a facility is operating above its design capacity, there is less available square feet per resident, in some cases, making social distancing in accordance with the CDC guidance impossible," CEO Damon Hininger said. "Our facility designs are generally more modern and allow for easier separation and social distancing plans."

Some inmates and employees still say they don't feel safe from the new coronavirus inside CoreCivic facilities. Two workers at a CoreCivic facility in California claimed in a lawsuit that the company didn't provide staff with proper protective equipment and that their job duties made it difficult to avoid contact with other people.

Nearly 150 CoreCivic employees had been infected by early May, and several have died. In April, frontline employees received a bonus for working under high-risk conditions and additional sick leave to allow staff to stay home when feeling ill.

Also that month, a group of detainees at two ICE facilities in Arizona operated by CoreCivic asked a court to release them because they feared getting sick. They claimed it was difficult to maintain basic hygiene, impossible to practice social distancing and hard to find appropriate protective equipment. A judge concluded in May that ICE was not taking reasonable measures at the CoreCivic facilities to protect the detainees, ordering the agency to release one detainee and improve conditions for the others.

A spokesperson for CoreCivic said the company is providing masks to all staff and inmates and that disposable gloves are readily available to staff. To bolster supplies of protective equipment, "inmate-volunteers" have made tens of thousands of masks for use at CoreCivic facilities.

Jennifer Gaddy, a researcher at Vanderbilt University who studies bacterial infections and also advocates for prison reform, said that infectious diseases spread easily in jails and prisons even in the best of times, so it's not surprising that they are coronavirus hot spots as well. Gaddy argues that the spread of COVID-19 in jails and prisons is a threat to everyone and she's hoping that the pandemic will lead to lasting changes that reduce infectious disease transmission even after the coronavirus pandemic subsides.

"For years, we've seen that prisons have really high rates of transmission of hepatitis and HIV and tuberculosis. People have sort of shrugged their shoulders and said, 'These are disposable people to our community,'" she said. "Prison health is public health. These are members of our community. Staff come into these facilities and have to be exposed, and they turn around and go home to their families."

Gaddy said that releasing inmates is the only truly effective way to stop the spread of a disease like COVID-19 in jails and prisons. That has happened in many local jails — jail populations in Tennessee fell by about 31 percent in the spring — but CoreCivic's inmate population has declined only slightly.

The number of ICE detainees dropped sharply during the pandemic, mostly because migration at the Southern U.S. border slowed down. Populations at state prisons operated by CoreCivic declined modestly. In total, CoreCivic's inmate population declined by about 3 percent from March to April.

"This is due to disruptions in the criminal justice system as the number of courts in session and prosecutions have declined and with many state and local government agencies deciding to release certain offenders to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission," Hininger said on a conference call. "With some states already starting to reopen their economies and even more following similar plans over the next few months, we expect a coinciding gradual resumption of these government activities returning to pre-pandemic levels."

The reduction in the number of people incarcerated cut into CoreCivic's profits, but executives don't expect the pandemic to have long-term effects on its prison population. Alexandra Chambers, an advocate who has worked on prison reform in Tennessee for more than a decade, said she doesn't expect the pandemic itself to have any lasting impacts on the prison system or private operators like CoreCivic.

"Any long term sustained change would have to come from community demands and organizing for decarceration for the safety and wellbeing of those who are incarcerated and their loved ones," she said.

She said the pandemic showed it's possible to reduce inmate populations, and she's hoping the last several months will serve as an example for the public.

As a for-profit company, the pandemic doesn't change CoreCivic's ultimate goal. In the company's recent statement that it might drop its tax-advantaged real estate investment trust structure, CoreCivic reassured shareholders that it is still generating "strong cash flows" during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"While the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic continue to be a priority to ensure the safety of our staff and individuals in our care," Hiniger said "We are also focused on creating long-term shareholder value and delivering on our company's purpose."

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Problems Persist at Tennessee's Mismanaged Prisons

Former CoreCivic correctional officer alleges dehumanization and lack of accountability at Trousdale

BY STEVEN HALE — JAN 22, 2020 5 AM

One of the first things Ashley Dixon learned when she was training to be a correctional officer at CoreCivic's Trousdale Turner Correctional Center was that you never slam an inmate to the ground. At least not when you're writing up the incident report. She was told that, in writing, it's better to describe "using balance misplacement techniques to 'assist' an inmate to the ground." A captain would help new officers get the hang of it.

"You don't want to have to explain to the judge why you 'slammed' someone to the ground," Dixon recalls being told by an instructor.

Dixon lasted seven months working at the notoriously troubled prison, leaving after what she has called the hardest period of her life. That was in 2017, and she has been speaking out about what she experienced and witnessed there ever since. Dixon testified at a state legislative hearing months after resigning from the prison, describing, among other things, how she witnessed two inmates die due to medical neglect. Earlier this month, she testified again at the legislature in the wake of a highly critical state audit of Tennessee's state-run and CoreCivic-run prisons. The audit calls for increased oversight of the state's prison system and finds that the Tennessee Department of Correction and Nashville-based for-profit prison giant CoreCivic mishandled sexual abuse investigations as well as inmate deaths. Along with those were findings related to issues that have been constant at CoreCivic prisons, and Trousdale in particular: inadequate staffing and insufficient medical and mental health care.

Three years ago, when she was a new correctional officer at Trousdale, Dixon took detailed notes during her training. Those notes describe a culture in which prisoners are dehumanized and guards are rarely held accountable for their actions. The picture painted by Dixon's descriptions of training sessions and discussions with instructors makes the recent audit's findings seem inevitable.

The report concludes that prison leaders failed to "ensure that state and CoreCivic facilities staff collected and reported complete, accurate, and valid information" about inmate deaths and violent incidents. The findings make these practices look less like oversights than intentional results. Along with the advice about how to describe physical confrontations, Dixon notes how one instructor told her and her fellow officers-in-training: "We don't have riots, we have major disturbances. That's the term we use."

But beyond the education in Orwellian euphemisms, trainees were explicitly told, Dixon notes, that their well-being depended on viewing inmates not as humans but as dangerous animals.

"You have to be aggressive," one officer told her, as recorded in her notes. "That's why I have to separate my religion from my job. Because my behavior may not be the most godly. Once they get in here, they behave like animals. Like caged animals."

That attitude was combined with a notion that guards could act with relative impunity.

“I have never fired an officer over a grievance and I never will,” said one instructor, according to Dixon’s notes.

In an interview with the *Scene*, Dixon recalls the staffing issues that have been associated with Trousdale since it opened in early 2016. During her time at the prison, she was one of numerous employees commuting more than an hour to and from Nashville for long shifts and getting little sleep in between. Sometimes after working six days straight, she says, she would be called in to work on the seventh day because of staffing shortages.

In her fellow trainees, Dixon saw the effects of the prison’s culture.

“As the months went by, they either quit their jobs or they learned to accept it, and they were OK with it and they became part of it,” she says. “It was sort of like those were the only two options — to either walk away or to become part of this system that’s hurting people.”

CoreCivic spokesperson Amanda Gilchrist tells the *Scene* by email the company has taken steps to address the staffing issues plaguing Trousdale, and has recently “significantly increased pay to attract and retain employees.” The starting wage at Trousdale is now more than \$16.50 per hour, she says.

“As we’ve acknowledged previously, there were challenges with bringing the Trousdale Turner Correctional Center up to full speed after its opening,” Gilchrist says. “We’ve worked hard to address the challenges we’ve faced, and while we still have work to do, we are making progress.”

In response to the recently released audit, Gilchrist says CoreCivic “will continue to work closely with our partners at the Tennessee Department of Correction to ensure our administrative processes are fully compliant and provide total transparency into our operations.” In spite of the audit’s findings, Gilchrist says “all allegations of sexual misconduct are promptly, thoroughly and objectively investigated” and tracked.

As for Dixon’s allegations, Gilchrist says CoreCivic investigated her claims after she first made them in 2017. The company acknowledged staffing issues at Trousdale, but Gilchrist says an investigator “was generally unable to find sufficient evidence to validate Ms. Dixon’s other allegations.”

But troubling accounts continue to emerge from Trousdale. Earlier this month, a person with a loved one incarcerated there wrote to the *Scene* to relay the ongoing issues at the facility and the danger their loved one was facing. They described numerous assaults and gang violence, as well as “needed medical treatment and medication never received, rapes, stabbings, assaults, extortion, drugs by the pound, packages thrown over the fence, hundreds of cell phones, butcher knives, etc.”

Meanwhile, in Nashville earlier this week a bill was introduced at the Metro Council by Councilmember Emily Benedict that would end the city’s contract with CoreCivic to run a local prison.

What the state’s audit made clear, though, is that problems persist in prisons run by CoreCivic as well as those run by the Tennessee Department of Correction. And what legislators made clear — Republican legislators, anyway — is that they will mostly continue to trust the department to figure things out while providing limited oversight. After the damning testimony earlier this month, a committee of state lawmakers voted to approve the department’s continued operation, refusing even to delay the authorization so that the audit’s findings could be reviewed more closely.



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NEWS

CoreCivic investigating ex-officer's allegations of negligent deaths at private prison

Dave Boucher The Tennessean

Published 4:41 p.m. CT Dec. 12, 2017 | Updated 5:11 p.m. CT Dec. 12, 2017

Private prison operator CoreCivic will investigate serious allegations levied Tuesday by a former correctional officer about her time at the largest private prison in Tennessee.

Ashley Dixon fought back tears Tuesday as she told lawmakers about witnessing two inmates die due to medical neglect during her seven months as a correctional officer at Trousdale Turner Correctional Center, operated by the Nashville-based company previously known as Corrections Corporation of America.

"The first death, I missed work for days. I just couldn't go in. I actually attended the prisoner's funeral out of state," Dixon said after Tuesday's legislative hearing.

"I was just so wrecked because I don't think he needed to die, and I tried so hard to convince people of that for three days."

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Describing her time at the prison as the "hardest seven months of my life," Dixon said she was taught to downplay or soften language in reports describing physical encounters with inmates. After the hearing she said she was routinely sexually harassed by inmates and officers.

She told lawmakers she repeatedly reported problems to superiors, but nothing changed, prompting her resignation in September.

"We take these allegations seriously and are looking into the issues raised by Ms. Dixon. Until we've had an opportunity to investigate, it would be premature for us to comment," CoreCivic spokesman Jonathan Burns said after the hearing.

Several other people who spoke at the hearing alleged neglect and abuse at Trousdale. Burns said CoreCivic also is looking in to those allegations.

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Lawmakers called the hearing to follow up on a scathing state audit that listed issues with understaffing and gang violence at Trousdale, a facility about 60 miles northeast of Nashville.

The state used the hearing to blast CoreCivic, putting the Tennessee Department of Correction on notice to keep the company on a shorter lease to ensure it is fulfilling the terms of its contracts.

Dixon said it's a good sign CoreCivic is investigating now, but she remains skeptical anything will improve.

"My question would be why didn't they look into it already? I had been raising these issues for months," Dixon said.

"I question whether they would be taking it seriously now."

The warden of Trousdale said he has retrained some staff to address issues raised in the state audit. Department officials said they will do more to hold CoreCivic accountable in the future.

CoreCivic has a five-year, \$276 million contract to operate the Trousdale facility, which opened in 2016.

Reach Dave Boucher at dboucher@tennessean.com or 615-259-8892 and on Twitter @Dave_Boucher1.



**Elizabeth
Weill-
Greenberg**

Sep 06, 2018

SHARE



‘JUST LET HIM KICK’

Lawsuits allege that a private Tennessee prison neglected diabetic prisoners, contributing to at least one death.

Ashley Dixon first met Jonathan Salada when he was kicking his cell door.

It was spring of 2017 and Dixon had just started working as a correctional officer at CoreCivic’s Trousdale Turner Correctional Center in Tennessee. It was her first, and would be her last, job in corrections.

“What’s wrong with him?” Dixon asked the officer who was training her.

The officer told her “he wanted his insulin but they haven’t called for insulin yet,” Dixon recalled in a recent interview with *The Appeal*. The officer’s response? “*Just let him kick.*”

He continued kicking for two more hours. Dixon kept asking the officer what they could do. Finally, she told Dixon to call the infirmary if she wanted to. Dixon did and learned that people with insulin-dependent diabetes had already been called out of their cells to receive insulin injections hours earlier. They let Salada out to receive his shot.

Illustration by Michelle Mildenberg



when she was working.

About a month later, on May 24, 2017, she heard an emergency medical call for Salada over the prison radio.

According to an incident report Dixon later submitted to a captain at the prison, Salada “was in extreme pain and screaming for help.” The nurses initially refused to enter his cell; when they finally did, they checked his vitals and left. “I just can’t figure out what his game is,” one of the nurses said to a lieutenant, according to Dixon’s incident report.

Three days later, Salada would be pronounced dead.

The Appeal requested but has not yet received his autopsy report. His official cause of death, according to [a local media report](#), was an overdose of buprenorphine, a prescription opioid painkiller, with diabetes listed as a contributing factor.

Spotty, erratic, and dangerous

We all need insulin to survive, and most people produce it regularly on their own. But in Type 1 diabetics like Salada, the body doesn’t produce insulin. To stay healthy, Type 1 diabetics and some Type 2 diabetics must check their blood sugar with a finger prick and receive insulin via injection or an insulin pump multiple times a day, carefully timed with the consumption of carbohydrates.

Missing even a single dose of insulin can be harmful, explained Sarah Fech-Baughman, director of litigation for government affairs and advocacy at the American Diabetes Association (ADA). “If a patient goes without insulin for hours to days, he or she could develop a condition called diabetic ketoacidosis—which is life-threatening.” If a patient receives inadequate insulin and has chronically high blood glucose for a sustained period of time, she added, it can also cause serious complications like blindness and cardiovascular disease.

The legal advocacy program at the ADA receives roughly 200 requests per year from incarcerated people who are receiving inadequate medical care, according to Fech-Baughman. The care of people with diabetes held in Trousdale is the subject of a class-action lawsuit by the ADA against CoreCivic (formerly Corrections Corporation of America) and the Tennessee Department of Correction. There are at least 60 Type 1 diabetics or Type 2 diabetics incarcerated at Trousdale who require insulin injections, according to the ADA’s complaint.

“

[T]hey did not bring me any insulin for two days and I got really sick. ... I could not stop throwing up.

Douglas Dodson, plaintiff in ADA suit

According to the lawsuit, blood sugar checks and the delivery of insulin—both of which should be coordinated with meals—are sporadic, erratic, and at times nonexistent. Meals, blood sugar checks, and insulin injections are given at irregular times during the prison’s frequent lockdowns, the suit explains, forcing

unconscionable delay in receiving basic diabetes care is the functional equivalent of receiving no care at all,” the lawsuit alleges.

Firsthand accounts from prisoners with diabetes inside Trousdale detail their own metaphorical kicks at the door for insulin:

“[T]hey did not bring me any insulin for two days and I got really sick,” Douglas Dodson wrote in a handwritten note submitted as an exhibit in the ADA suit. “I could not stop throwing up.”

Another note from Dodson included with the ADA suit refers to a day he didn’t get any insulin until two hours after he had already eaten breakfast: “[M]y blood sugar was 476 at this time and we are still lock down.” (A normal blood sugar reading for an adult diabetic is between 80 and 130 before a meal, and less than 180 one to two hours after a meal begins.)

“I haven’t got any insulin at all today. It’s almost 1 pm,” Tazarius Leach writes in a grievance attached to his pro se complaint against the prison. “I’m not trying to cause a problem but its my health ... I’m getting force to miss shots I have no control over.”

Central to the ADA’s lawsuit is the claim that CoreCivic prioritizes profits over care. This, ACLU of Tennessee executive director Hedy Weinberg explains, is precisely why the ACLU opposes prison privatization.

“Handing control over to private prison companies is clearly a recipe for abuse and neglect,” said Weinberg. “A private prison is most concerned about their stockholders.”

Both CoreCivic and Correct Care Solutions, LLC, which handles all medical care at Trousdale, deny all wrongdoing. In response to a request for an interview, Steven Owen, managing director of communications for CoreCivic wrote in an email, “While we can’t speak to the specifics of pending litigation beyond our court filings, CoreCivic is committed to providing high-quality healthcare to those entrusted to our care.” The Tennessee Department of Correction did not respond to a request for comment.

Beyond Trousdale

Negligent medical care isn’t confined to for-profit prisons, notes Gabriel Eber, senior staff counsel with the ACLU National Prison Project. “I’ve seen bad care in state-run prisons,” he said. “I’ve seen bad care in private prisons.”

People with diabetes suffer in local jails and immigration detention facilities too—reflecting a broader inhumanity that snakes through the U.S. prison system.

In 2013, Carlos Mercado died of diabetic ketoacidosis about 15 hours after being taken to Rikers Island in New York. While at the jail, he carried around a bag of his own vomit and requested his insulin, which had been confiscated. Guards reportedly thought he was “dope sick.”

Also, in 2013, in Oklahoma’s McClain County jail, Kory Dane Wilson was not given insulin for three days—reportedly despite pleas from family, friends, and cellmates—and died of diabetic ketoacidosis.

Prison is punishment. But the punishment is the taking away of the liberty. It's nothing more. It shouldn't be a death sentence.

Gabriel Eber, ACLU National Prison Project

In 2014, William Joel Dixon died after going without insulin for a week while in jail in George County, Mississippi. The day of his death, Dixon passed out in the shower. When a jailer asked the nurse to help him, she reportedly said she didn't have time.

"Prison is punishment," said Eber. "But the punishment is the taking away of the liberty. It's nothing more. It shouldn't be a death sentence."

Maintaining a healthy blood sugar is a daily challenge for people with diabetes even on the outside. In a prison healthcare system that may oversee thousands of patients, diabetics far too often fall through the cracks, said Eber.

At Trousdale, for instance, the medical staff consists of just four nurses and two nurse practitioners, according to a March 2018 filing in the ADA's suit. As of July 5, 2017, 2,483 people were incarcerated at Trousdale.

"There is a sense of anger when I speak with insulin-dependent diabetics because they're being wronged in a way that they know is going to affect their health," Eber added. "And it's not if or maybe. It's certain."

Type 1 diabetics are often well-versed in their own care—their lives depend on it, Eber explained. But their expertise, he said, can clash with the views of prison medical staff.

Brenda Menjivar Guardado, a 22-year-old Type 1 diabetic who had fallen into a diabetic coma at 13, knew to bring her insulin with her when she came to the United States seeking asylum from El Salvador. But when she was placed in ICE custody, her insulin was confiscated.

While Guardado was detained at CoreCivic's T. Don Hutto Residential Center in Texas in 2017, she was provided with a different type of insulin than the one she had brought, causing her blood sugar to spike.

"They were giving Ms. Guardado what they were told was the best insulin treatment available, what most diabetic patients would want to receive," said Robert Painter, director of pro bono programs and communications at American Gateways, which represented Guardado. "They were not hearing her when she was saying this type of insulin would not be effective for her."

Eventually, Guardado was pushed into accepting the deportation, Painter told *The Appeal*. "Ultimately that was the only way she thought she could get the care she needed."

ICE declined to address Guardado's case specifically. In a statement to *The Appeal*, Nina Pruneda, a spokesperson for the agency said, "ICE is committed to ensuring the welfare of all those in the agency's custody, including providing access to necessary and appropriate medical care."

Salada's final days

unconscious in the cell. Dixon asked a nurse how Salada was doing, he had been admitted to the infirmary overnight. The nurse reported he was “sleeping like a baby” and that he was “likely doing this for attention,” Dixon wrote in her incident report. But a medical officer told Dixon that Salada had been “screaming in pain all night long.”

While it’s still unclear exactly what caused that pain, that morning a physician ordered Salada to be removed from the infirmary and returned to his cell, according to a lawsuit filed by Salada’s father. Salada’s father’s attorney stated via email that he prefers not to comment on active cases.

“[H]e continued to complain of pain and suffering and continued to request medical care but said requests were ignored and no further medical care or treatment was provided,” reads the complaint.

“

After his death, I was really haunted that my relationship had just been that of a guard and a prisoner, that I didn't get to know him.

Ashley Dixon, former correctional officer,
Trousdale Turner Correctional Center

On the night of May 26, Salada was “still in horrible pain,” Dixon wrote in her incident report. The following morning he was “shaking and moaning in pain.”

That morning, May 27, the nurse did not bring insulin for Salada, Dixon said, despite her pleas. At the end of her shift, at about 8 a.m., she went to the infirmary to report that Salada had still not received his insulin.

“Well, we will get to it when we get to it,” one of the nurses told her, according to Dixon’s incident report.

At about 8:40 a.m., Salada was found unconscious in his cell. His blood sugar was 587, more than three times what it should have been. He was pronounced dead at 9:34 a.m. at Trousdale County Medical Center. He was 25. He had been at Trousdale less than a year.

“After his death, I was really haunted that my relationship had just been that of a guard and a prisoner, that I didn’t get to know him,” said Dixon. “I went to his funeral and saw pictures of his childhood trips and saw him as a person, which is something we’re not able to do working in the prison.”

Dixon said regardless of what caused his death, his health was neglected. She wishes she could have done more for him. “I wish I could have held his hand or done something that was more comforting than being there,” she said, “being a witness to his suffering, not being able to do anything.”

■ ■ ■

If you or a loved one with Type 1 diabetes have experienced difficulties with care while incarcerated or if you have worked in a prison and witnessed such issues, please contact the author through Twitter at @elizabethweill. ■

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NEWS

Murfreesboro man charged in death of prison cellmate at Trousdale Turner Correctional Facility

Brinley Hineman Daily News Journal

Published 10:07 a.m. CT Feb. 20, 2020

A Rutherford County man has been charged in his cellmate's death at the Trousdale Turner Correctional Facility.

Jacob Kado, 40, was indicted by a Trousdale County Grand Jury on a second-degree murder charge after Tennessee Bureau of Investigation agents revealed Kado killed his former cellmate, Ernest Hill, in a fight.

In June, Hill, 42, was found unconscious by prison officials. Staff attempted to perform life-saving measures on Hill, and he was transported to an outside hospital where he was pronounced dead.

The TBI announced a fight between Kado and Hill ultimately led to Hill's death.

The prison, located in Hartsville, is a medium security facility.

Kado has faced murder charges before

This is the second time Kado has been charged with murder.

He was charged with second-degree murder in 2015 after his father was found dead at his home in downtown Murfreesboro. The elder Kado was found slumped over with a swollen forehead, police said at the time.

The father's autopsy showed he died of blunt force trauma, and not a heart attack or stroke like Kado originally claimed.

Kado eventually pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter and was sentenced to 12 years in prison, of which he was ordered to serve 45%, or nearly five and a half years, which is why he

was at Trousdale Turner at the time of Hill's death.

Public records list a slew of charges brought against Kado, who previously worked in building maintenance, over the years by various agencies including aggravated assault, multiple DUIs and aggravated burglary.

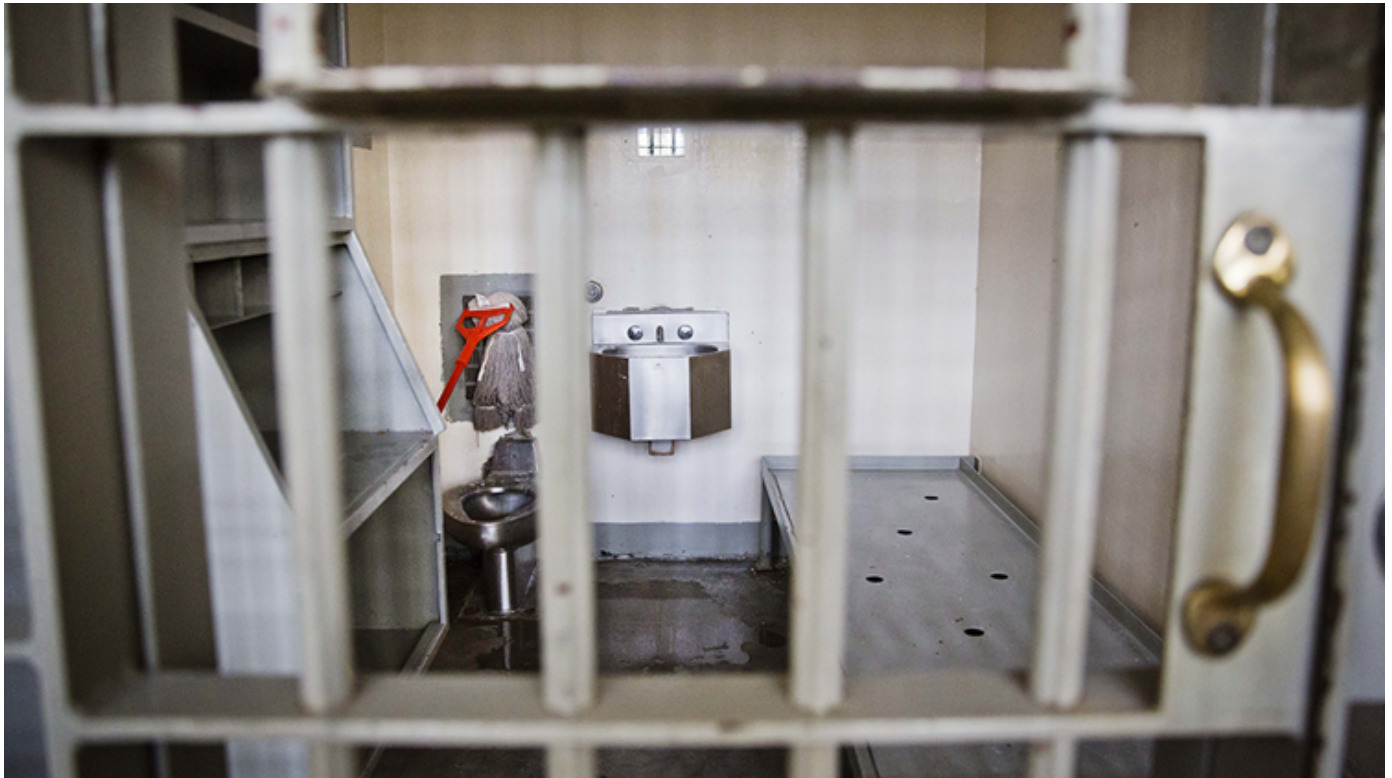
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Man killed during inmate-on-inmate altercation at Trousdale Turner prison

ETHAN ILLERS, DIGITAL CONTENT PRODUCER

POSTED JUN 16, 2019



AP Photo/David Goldman

HARTSVILLE, TN (WSMV) - The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation is investigating the death of an inmate at Trousdale Turner Correctional Facility in Hartsville.

TBI told News4 the incident happened inside a prison cell involving two inmates.

According to a spokesperson from CoreCivic, the owner and operator of the prison, a corrections officer found an inmate unconscious on the floor of his cell while conducting a formal count around 3 p.m. Saturday. Unit staff on scene initiated "life-saving measures until medical staff arrived."

EMS arrived and transported the inmate to a hospital outside the facility where he was pronounced dead at 4 p.m.

TBI identified the deceased inmate as 42-year-old Ernest Hill. The cause of death has not been released and no correctional officers were injured or involved.

CoreCivic spokesperson Brandon Bissell sent News4 this statement Sunday afternoon.

“ *"Trousdale Turner Correctional Center remains on partial lockdown status Sunday morning following an inmate-on-inmate altercation that resulted in one inmate losing his life.*

On Saturday, June 15 at approximately 3 pm CDT, while conducting formal count, an inmate was found unconscious on the floor of his cell. A medical emergency was called and unit staff initiated life-saving measures until medical staff arrived. EMS was called to the facility and the inmate was transported to an outside hospital where he was pronounced deceased at 4 pm CDT.

Our partners at the Tennessee Department of Correction were immediately notified and facility staff are cooperating fully with the investigation. The unit remains on lockdown status while the TDOC Office of Investigations and Compliance investigates the incident.

In deference to our government partner, other inquiries regarding the investigation should be directed to the TDOC Communications Division." **”**

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Ethan Illers

WSMV Digital Content Producer

A New York City native and a graduate of the Mizzou School of Journalism, Ethan joined the WSMV Digital Team in June 2019. Send him story ideas, food recommendations and sports topics to Ethan.Illers@wsmv.com and follow him on Twitter [@EthanIllers_TV](https://twitter.com/EthanIllers_TV)!

Recorded conversations reveal life inside prison ravaged by COVID-19

JEREMY FINLEY

POSTED MAY 6, 2020

HARTSVILLE, TN (WSMV) - In recorded conversations with family members, inmates at the Trousdale Turner Correctional Center describe a prison where correctional officers and case workers, not medical providers, treat COVID-19 patients, and the sick intermingle with healthy inmates.

Claims that Core Civic, the private company that runs the facility, repeatedly denied.

Because inmates are prohibited from doing interviews and staff are often hesitant to speak to reporters for fear of losing their jobs, family members of inmates in Trousdale recorded their conversations and provided them to News4 Investigates.

The family members asked that News4 Investigates not reveal they or their relatives' identities.

The state prison had its first death from COVID-19 this week, when convicted serial rapist Ronnie Johnson, 67, succumbed from the disease.

More than 1,200 other inmates have tested positive, and Core Civic said 50 employees are also sick.

"I'm really in fear for my life," said an inmate in conversation with his sister. "The CO's (correctional officers) keep on getting it. They're dropping like flies."

That same inmate said he's observing staff, not trained in medicine, are treating the sick.

"They got case managers, and correctional officers, treating the inmates. Ain't no doctors coming down here," the inmate said.

Amanda Gilchrist, director of public affairs for Core Civic, wrote in an email that the inmate's claim is false.

"Trousdale Turner's health services department has a full complement of medical providers to treat the individuals in our care including 3 physicians, 2 dentists, a Health Services Administrator, 2 clinical supervisors, dental assistants, 2 nurse practitioners, and several RN's and LPN's. The medical staff is conducting symptom and temperature checks on all positive inmates twice daily at the facility," Gilchrist wrote.

In a conversation with another inmate, a family member asked about if the inmate is being separated from the sick.

"Are they separating – like putting the positives in this pod and putting the negatives in this pod?" the family member asked.

"No, we're all together," the inmate said.

Sluss denied that claim as well.

"That is patently false. The cohort process was completed over the weekend. The positive inmates are housed with positive inmates and negative inmates with other negative inmates. None of the positive inmates are symptomatic at this time and the facility will continue to monitor," Gilchrist wrote.

Senator Brenda Gilmore, D-Nashville, said she's heard from several family members of inmates who echo the same concerns.

"A lot of time, people might not have sympathy for inmates. How do you convey to these people that this is something that they should be concerned about?" asked News4 Investigates.

"If (inmates) are infected, then they infect the staff. When a prison guard goes back onto the community, they take the virus to their families and out into that community," Gilmore said.

Below are the full responses from Core Civic about the inmates claims.

Inmate - "They got case managers, and correctional officers, treating the inmates. Ain't no doctors coming down here."

Response: This is false. Trousdale Turner's health services department has a full complement of medical providers to treat the individuals in our care including 3 physicians, 2 dentists, a Health Services Administrator, 2 clinical supervisors, dental assistants, 2 nurse practitioners, and several RN's and LPN's. The medical staff is conducting symptom and temperature checks on all positive inmates twice daily at the facility. In accordance with contract, non-medical staff such as unit managers and case managers are permitted to conduct temperature and symptom checks on negative inmates (twice weekly.)

Inmate: "That is not her ((talking about the case manager) job. She is not – she is not medical – she just don't have the experience in the medical field to even deal with a coronavirus patient."

Response: See above.

Inmate: "I'm really in fear for my life."

Response: Since even before any confirmed cases of COVID-19 in our facilities, we have rigorously followed the guidance of local, state and federal (CDC) health authorities, as well as our government partners. We have responded to this unprecedented situation appropriately, thoroughly and with care for the safety and well-being of those entrusted to us and our communities. Our practices have evolved and changed as the CDC guidance and recommendations have evolved over time and as we learn more about the novel coronavirus. We're also working closely with our partners at the Tennessee Department of Correction to ensure the health and safety of everyone at Trousdale Turner. (You have our full statement from the website, as well, that covers our COVID-19 plans and response on a global level)

Inmate: "The CO's keep on getting it. They're dropping like flies."

Response: CoreCivic conducted a facility-wide testing initiative with both inmates and staff at Trousdale Turner last week. We publicly disclosed the results of the COVID-19 tests and can confirm we have a total of 50 employees and contractors that have tested positive for the virus. These employees are isolated at home and in regular communication with their healthcare provider. In addition, there is a robust communication process in place at TTCC. Since the onset of the pandemic, those in our care have been notified whenever there was a positive case at the facility (staff or inmate) and we advised if they were affected or not (following contact tracing.) All inmates are notified of their test results (positive or negative.)

Inmate's relative: "Are they separating – like putting the positives in this pod and putting the negatives in this pod?"

Inmate: "No. We're all together."

Response: That is patently false. The cohort process was completed over the weekend. The positive inmates are housed with positive inmates and negative inmates with other negative inmates. None of the positive inmates are symptomatic at this time and the facility will continue to monitor.

Location	Number Tested	Number Positive	Number Negative	Pending
Bledsoe County Correctional Complex	2,319	586	1,730	3
Morgan County Correctional Complex	0	0	0	0
Northeast Correctional Complex	1	0	1	0
Lois M. DeBerry Special Needs Facility	5	0	5	0
Riverbend Maximum Security Institution	2	1	1	0
Tennessee Prison for Woman	5	0	4	1
Turney Center Industrial Complex	275	38	237	0
Turney Center Industrial Complex-Annex	38	2	36	0
Mart Luttrell Transition Center	3	1	1	1
Northwest Correctional Complex	898	45	848	5
West Tennessee State Penitentiary	1	0	1	0
Women's Therapeutic Residential Center	3	0	2	1
Contract & Private Managed prisons				
Hardeman County Correctional Facility	4	1	2	1
South Central Correctional Facility	2	0	2	0
Trousdale Turner Correctional Center	2,404	1,285	1,089	30
Whiteville Correctional Facility	2	0	2	0
Total	5,962	1,959	3,961	42

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580 inmates with COVID-19 at Bledsoe prison completed isolation

Jeremy Finley

Chief Investigative Reporter

Jeremy Finley is the chief investigator for News4 Investigates. His reporting has resulted in criminal convictions, legislative hearings before the U.S. Congress, and the payout of more than a million dollars to scam victims.

Gang activity, security a concern at Trousdale Turner facility

REPORTED BY DEMETRIA KALODIMOS

POSTED JUN 21, 2017



Trousdale Turner Correctional Center in Hartsville, TN, is operated by CoreCivic. (WSMV)

The Trousdale Turner Correctional Center was supposed to provide quality jobs to residents of Trousdale County.

But according to the mayor and several other people the Channel 4 I-Team talked to, not many locals work there.

Until recently, before a contract expired, guards from another security company were recruited, put up at hotels and bused in to work. They told the I-Team they earned higher wages than those employed by CoreCivic.

But some say the people expected to keep the peace at Trousdale Turner are known gang members chosen by administrators and transferred there.

“He called me and said, ‘I don’t know where I’m going. I’ll call you when I get there,’” said a woman who asked to be identified as Casey.

The I-Team first met Casey in December. She was panicked over her husband’s sudden transfer to Trousdale Turner.

After 24 years in prison, the last five with a stellar record at Riverbend Maximum Security, he had a real shot at parole. But his wife said something he walked away from long ago was suddenly seen as a “valuable asset” to CoreCivic.

“Internal affairs told him he was transferred there because he’s considered an O.G. in the Crips,” Casey said. “An O.G. is shot for an original gangster. It means he’s been in a gang for a long time. He’s highly respected. He’s a leader.

“He has not been involved in any gang activity since he’s been at Riverbend, that was the purpose of him going there. And so they told him they were transferring him there so he could keep the peace and get them in line,” Casey added.

Keeping the peace has been a challenge at Trousdale Turner. Families, inmates and even some of its former correctional officers told the I-Team it’s an institution on the brink.

“Trousdale Turner is like no other facility I’ve ever experienced,” said Jacque Steubbel, a former chaplain. “The staff turnover there is tremendous. I’ve been told 245 percent in less than a year.”

CoreCivic will not say how many employees have quit or why.

“They put these huge facilities in the middle of nowhere you can’t staff. What are you going to do?” said Jeannie Alexander, an activist with No Exceptions.

The prison was built with the promise of 350 new jobs in a rural county where people need work. But they didn’t bite.

"If you asked 90 percent of the unemployed in the county, 90 percent would say, no, I don't want to work at the prison. Because law enforcement and corrections is not an easy thing," said Trowsdale County Mayor Carroll Carman.

Several former guards told the I-Team they were brought in from out of state, housed at a hotel, bused into work, paid a per diem, and made more money per hour than CoreCivic employees.

Records show some who were hired by G4s, a third party company, didn't stay because they couldn't pass the background check or walked off.

One female guard said she was left alone and in charge of 120 men without a radio or a weapon.

"We're getting reports of massive assaults and gang rapes in the middle of a pod, but with no intervention, because you simply cannot stop that sort of thing when you have one person," Alexander said.

And other guards seem to have also been at risk.

A recent emergency call described a female correction officer who "fell out." The caller was instructed to say she had a seizure, a description that seems to be used often when an ambulance is called.

There was no call placed at all for a county ambulance last month when inmate Dantwan Crump allegedly stabbed a lieutenant four times – in the arms, back, stomach and head – with a 7.5-inch sharpened, prison-made knife.

According to the official report, the correction officer had supposedly "sprayed his homie" and he had to jump in.

"They can't maintain that pod. They can't maintain security or control. So if something happens in the pod, if violence breaks out or if there's a medical emergency, there often isn't anyone in that pod, because if something happens, you don't stay in the middle of it," Alexander said.

That's where the imported gang members apparently fit in.

Casey, the inmate's wife, said she was told about the strategy personally by two prison administrators.

"He doesn't want to participate in gang activity," she said.

"It's almost as if they are encouraging gangs to start up," the I-Team said.

"Very much so," Casey replied.

"They're asking him to be a security threat, because once you're involved in gang activity, you're labeled a security threat," she added.

"Over half the inmate population is gang affiliated, and the TDOC actually brought in a sort of team or special security op group to identify gang affiliations to every inmate at Trousdale," Steubbel said. "I talked to one officer. I said, 'How many gang affiliations did you find?'"

The officer told Steubbel they round 1,465 gang affiliations.

"The last month there have been three weeks where they were locked down four days out of the week without showers, without anything. They're just in their cells," Casey said.

"This is absolute chaos. It's absolute chaos," she added.

"Danger continues to brew in our correction systems across the state," said Rep. John Ray Clemmons, D-Nashville.

Lawmakers say they're convinced Tennessee is heading back toward the mess in the 1980s when the feds took over the entire prison system.

"We have long known of environments of harm not only in our state facilities, but also and especially those operated by private corporations, especially the Trousdale facility," Clemmons said.

Clemmons had asked early in the fall to tour the new Trousdale facility. An invitation was granted, but when he asked to bring Channel 4's Demetria Kalodimos along, it never happened.

"Prisons love to say they can't allow people inside because of concerns for the security of the institution. What we're really talking about here is security of their secrets. That's why they don't want people inside," Alexander said.

Steubbel no longer works at Trousdale or for CoreCivic. The company said she was fired “for cause” after what they referred to as an investigation that “substantiated misconduct.”

The company claimed she was “providing misleading information to investigators” and now has a motive to “impugn our company.”

Prior to our interview, Steubbel told the I-Team she was terminated by CoreCivic based on what she claimed were false allegations from an incident at her previous post in Texas. She provided documentation of her claims.

She also shared an unemployment determination that awarded her compensation, charged to CoreCivic, with a finding that her employer fired her for a “reason that was not misconduct connected with the work.”

The I-Team has tried many times to get specific answers to questions and concerns we have heard about the prison.

Late last week, CoreCivic responded to some of our long-pending questions, saying in part, “Medical privacy considerations precluded them from providing details on deaths or injuries.” They also generically stated that their staff acted appropriately in all situations.

So far, no one from CoreCivic or the state will grant the I-Team an interview.

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NEWS

Gang activity, security a concern at Trousdale Turner facility

Posted Jun 21, 2017



Tennessee's Largest Prison Still Appears as Troubled as Ever

CoreCivic's Trousdale Turner Correctional Center continues to face claims of poor management

BY STEVEN HALE — FEB 13, 2019 8 AM

Since it opened in early 2016, Tennessee's largest prison — CoreCivic's Trousdale Turner Correctional Center — has also been one of its most deeply troubled.

A state audit in 2017 highlighted staffing shortages and mismanagement at the facility, and family members with loved ones on the inside have consistently raised concerns about the conditions there. Reports of rampant gang activity at the prison, which is located

about 50 miles northeast of Nashville, have been nearly constant. For years, CoreCivic, the Nashville-based private prison corporation that manages several Tennessee prisons, has faced similar claims of poor management at facilities around the country.

Now three years after it came online, and less than two months after state lawmakers heard testimony about violence at the facility, people close to the Trousdale prison tell the *Scene* that not much has changed. One lawyer who represents multiple Trousdale prisoners says inmates report that they face weeks-long lockdowns, which they see as largely driven by staffing issues.

“What the prisoners understand is basically that the place doesn’t operate without them,” the lawyer, who spoke under the condition of anonymity to protect the identity of prisoners, tells the *Scene*. “They’re the ones that are distributing meals three times a day. They’re the ones that are taking the trash out. They’re the ones that are keeping everything running. So there’s this very tricky relationship between the prisoners, who keep the wheels on the bus, and the guards, who have all of the theoretical power and control. I think there’s a lot of fear from the guard side that that power shift can go the wrong way basically at any time.”

As a result of that dynamic, the lawyer says, prison staff has been using what prisoners see as backdoor tactics, beyond official lockdowns, to keep the facility under control.

“They’ll do things like shut off the hot water for weeks at a time so that people just don’t go to the showers,” the lawyer says, adding that at a recent visit, a client hadn’t had a shower in more than a week.

Despite the conditions, the lawyer says, prisoners and families are often concerned about voicing complaints.

“There are an infinite number of ways that life can get worse,” she says.

One woman whose fiancé is a prisoner at Trousdale reports similar conditions. She also spoke on the condition of anonymity, fearing for the safety of her loved one on the inside.

“The [correctional officers] do not have control over that place,” she says.

She says her fiancé is essentially charged rent, under the threat of violence, by gang members who run his unit.

“He’s being extorted,” she says. “They’re making him pay to live there. The [nationwide street gang] Vice Lords, they run that unit.”

A group of men, she says, will come to her fiancé demanding money, or else they’ll be back at night.

“And they will,” she says. “He’s already gotten jumped before.”

Those sorts of stories and concerns are largely similar to ones that a group of family members expressed to Trousdale leadership in a 2017 letter, highlighting violence and a lack of medical care at the facility. The woman who spoke to the *Scene* recently says her fiancé has received needed mental health medication so inconsistently that he has stopped trusting what he is getting and often doesn’t take any medicine at all.

The *Scene* presented these claims to a CoreCivic spokesperson and received a statement from public affairs manager Rodney King. He did not respond to specific questions about how many days Trousdale has been on lockdown so far in 2019, or about the facility’s officer-to-inmate ratio.

King says CoreCivic has taken a number of steps to address the “challenges” at the facility. Among them: increasing wages and bonuses, which he says has “led to a 24 percent reduction in staff turnover from 2017” and improving the facility’s performance on audits by state and national oversight organizations.

King goes on:

“In addition to the improved scores on the TDOC audit referenced above, follow-up audits have continued to reflect the progress being made at TTCC. On the most recent audit, there were no findings related to any of the specific claims you referenced, many of which are outdated or inaccurate. Additionally, the facility currently has two full-time TDOC contract monitors onsite daily providing oversight, and CoreCivic has a full-time employee dedicated to reviewing and responding to concerns raised by inmate family members. Also, one technical point to note, the decision to place any part of a correctional facility on lockdown status is based on the need to address specific safety or security issues — it’s not related to staffing.”

The situation remains essentially unchanged. As prisoners and people close to them continue to report the same set of problems at Tennessee's largest prison — with a listed capacity of a little more than 2,500 prisoners — officials at the for-profit corporation that manages the facility continue to say the facility only gets better by the year.



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Posted by Concerned Parent

Jun 21 2019 12:47

I have been calling the facility since 11 Jun 2019, 3 to 4 times a day leaving messages each time about trying to set up special visitations. I called Family Advocacy, Visitations, Chaplains Office, and Wardens Assistant nobody has returned my call yet. It seems as that they don't care, how do they get away with not communicating with family members I live in Virginia and want to visit my son however I have to ask for special visitation and they do not help you set that up. I understand that they are a privately owned facility but they should have somebody they have to answer to if they are wrong. Who do I turn to for help can someone please tell me.



Posted by Ples lesley

Jun 03 2019 16:27

Trousdale denied my son medical help and when they did he had blood clots and stage 3 cancer there is much more to his story I need to find a lawyer to file a law suit he was granted a medical furlough 4-19-19 still incarcerated and needs immediate surgery to remove a tumor



Avatar

Posted by Dava Manning Silva

Mar 15 2019 00:13

Changing their name to CoreCivic is meaningless...they are still CCA. Still just as shady and sketchy as ever.



Avatar

Nothing but lies coming from their spokesperson. In the 6 weeks since the new year they've been locked down 4. They do essentially call for a "lockdown" if they are understaffed that day! They may not call it a lockdown but they do not allow these men to get out of their cells and stretch their legs or call their families. Meals are carted to the units at extremely sporadic times. One night they weren't given dinner at all with the promise of double portions in the morning. They went 24 hours without a meal. Vice Lord's absolutely RUN that place through extortion and violence. If you choose to stand up to them they will do everything in their power to shut you down. The "family advocate" position is a joke. They can't keep someone staffed in that position, I imagine because if someone goes in with the intentions of doing their job they are quickly overwhelmed by family members and complaints. The current "advocate" does not return calls or if he does he just simply states " that's not a part of my job description" he is rude and cold, what a perfect way to deter families from calling! For the love of all things holy TDOC take back control!!



Avatar

Posted by ladonnamayes

Feb 14 2019 11:58

I've written the news in 2017 my son James Hunt was in troudsdale Facility stabbed twice was refused medical treatment when I called the Warden they act as if they didnt know what I was talking about but I hear my son telling them what happen to him while I was on the phone with him (James) my son so i filed a lawsuit against them for refusing medical treatment also the warden, Commander for refusing to let him press chargers against the individuals. This Facilty should be shut down. Thank you LaDonna Dillard

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Trousdale Turner Corrections Officer Arrested

Written by Jessie Williams

Published: Tuesday, February 05, 2019



Brian Orrs

A Trousdale Turner Correctional Center corrections officers was arrested last week after allegedly being highly intoxicated and firing a handgun inside the home he shares with his son, his son's pregnant girlfriend and his grandchildren.

According to Macon County Sheriff Mark Gammons, he and other officers were dispatched to a residence on New Harmony Road around 7:30 p.m. on February 1, 2019, after reports of a shot fired inside of the home.

The caller stated that 43-year-old Brian Orrs had fired the shot in his bedroom with his family inside the home.

Orrs' son, his three grandchildren and his son's pregnant girlfriend - who was just days away from her due date - were located on the other side of the wall when Orrs was said to have fired the weapon.

Once officers arrived on the scene, they learned that Orrs' son was able to get his family out of the home and forced the two guns in Orrs' possession away from him. The family escaped to by car to another residence in Trousdale County.

Sheriff Gammons stated that Orrs would not come to the door after officers knocked and identified themselves.

When he did, he told authorities to leave and said he did nothing wrong.

While attempting to get Orrs to come out of the home, officers interviewed witnesses and learned he was highly intoxicated. One witness mentioned he had a white, powdery substance on his nose.

After nearly two hours, Orrs allegedly came outside in an aggressive manner with his pants down, shaking his private parts at officers.

Refusing to cooperate and resisting arrest, Mr. Orrs was tased by police to prevent him from doing further harm, and was then apprehended.

A search of the home and further investigation by deputies revealed that Orrs was in possession of a 12 gauge shotgun and a .40 caliber pistol. The pistol was the weapon used to shoot into the floor of Orrs' bedroom.

A razor blade with a small amount of white residue on it, marijuana paraphernalia, ammunition for the guns, two sets of scales and a container used to store marijuana were seized by authorities.

A the time of the incident, Orrs was a corrections officer employed by CoreCivic at Trousdale Turner Correctional Center.

Orrs was charged with six counts of aggravated assault, six counts of reckless endangerment, possession of a weapon while under the influence, indecent exposure, possession of drug paraphernalia, and resisting arrest.

His bond was set at \$73,000, and he is scheduled to appear in general sessions court on March 6, 2019.

NEWS

At Tennessee's largest prison, diabetic inmates say they are denied insulin to 'maximize profits'

CoreCivic, which runs Trousdale Turner prison, is facing three lawsuits over the care of inmates with diabetes

Brett Kelman Nashville Tennessean

Published 4:24 p.m. CT Aug. 7, 2018 | Updated 4:51 p.m. CT Aug. 7, 2018

Story Highlights

Class-action lawsuit says inmates wait for hours to get insulin during frequent lockdowns

Another suit says diabetic inmate Jonathan Salada died screaming in pain

For several nights in a row, Douglas Dodson says he did not receive the drug that keeps him alive.

Dodson, an inmate at Trousdale Turner Correctional Facility, had been stuck in his cell for weeks as a lockdown dragged on and on at Tennessee's largest and newest prison. The chow hall was off-limits, so food were served in his cell on cafeteria trays. Each meal was supposed to come with an insulin shot, which helps diabetics like Dodson control their delicate blood sugar, but sometimes the insulin wasn't provided until hours later.

Sometimes, Dodson alleges, it wasn't provided at all.

"For the past 2 1/2 weeks we have been on lock down, and it has been several evenings that we have not been called to the clinic to get our insulin," Dodson wrote on a prisoner complaint form, now filed as an exhibit in a lawsuit against the prison.

"I know my insulin is keeping me alive and I really need it everyday. This has went on long enough here at this facility!"

This complaint, which Dodson wrote during a three-week prison lockdown two years ago, is representative of what inmates describe as woefully inadequate diabetes care at Trousdale,

a for-profit prison run by CoreCivic. In a class-action lawsuit, Dodson and other former inmates allege that about 60 diabetic Trousdale prisoners face daily risk because of unhealthy food, unpredictable meal times and spotty access to insulin shots. Diabetics generally inject insulin when they eat, but inmates allege they often wait hours for the drug because of understaffing, which is designed to "maximize profits," and frequent prison lockdowns.

The class-action lawsuit is one of at least three ongoing suits that have accused CoreCivic of endangering diabetic inmates. Former Trousdale inmate Thomas Leach filed a separate suit levying similar allegations against the prison in 2016, and a third suit was filed this year after the death of inmate Jonathan Salada, who allegedly spent his final days in excruciating pain because of diabetes complications and negligent care.

CoreCivic has denied wrongdoing in all three suits and insisted that the plaintiffs in the class-action case are responsible for their own diabetes complications. In a court filing, the company has claimed that Dodson and the other inmates have a documented history of skipping meals, refusing insulin shots, using illegal drugs and buying sugary snacks at the prison store in "willful non-compliance" with a diabetic diet.

In a statement on Tuesday, CoreCivic declined to respond to discuss the specifics of the lawsuits but said it is committed to "high-quality healthcare" for inmates and "appropriate levels of staffing" in company facilities.

MORE: In ICE custody he lost his sight in one eye but gained a Tennessee town's support

Private prison protesters shut down CoreCivic

The three diabetes lawsuits against Trousdale, each filed over the past two years, have drawn little attention until this week, when mistreatment allegations were revived by a protest at the CoreCivic Nashville's headquarters.

A few dozen protesters on Monday blocked entry to the company parking garage by chaining themselves to cement-filled barrels and erecting a makeshift crow's nest on a 20-foot tripod. Police dispersed the protest after about nine hours and more than a dozen arrests.

During the protest, a former CoreCivic employee said she heard Salada shouting, desperately in need of help, in the days before his death.

"He screamed in pain for three days," said Ashely Dixon, who resigned from Trousdale about

told me he was faking it.”

Dixon's statements follow the lawsuit filed by Salada's family alleging the inmate was left screaming in pain in his cell in the days before he died. The lawsuit claims that Salada had three blood tests revealing his blood sugar was alarmingly high, and was taken to the prison infirmary twice, but still never received “appropriate or proper medical care.” Salada was returned to his cell still in pain, the lawsuit said, then later found unconscious. He died about an hour later.

But Salada's death appears more complicated than the lawsuit presents. According to Salada's autopsy, his blood sugar was dangerously high when he died, but his official cause of death was an overdose of buprenorphine, a prescription opioid painkiller. Diabetes was listed as a contributing factor.

OVERDOSES: These opioid addicts looked dead. Then Nashville police reached for their 'magic' drug.

Tennessee's biggest and newest prison

CoreCivic, previously known as Corrections Corporation of America, is one of the largest private prison companies in the U.S. with about 65 prisons and eight immigration detention facilities. The company has a five-year \$276-million deal to run Trousdale, a 2,552-bed minimum security prison in Hartsville, Tennessee.

The diabetes lawsuits follow other allegations raised against the prison since it opened in 2015, most of which stem from claims of understaffing. Last year, a scathing audit said the prison is plagued by gangs because of insufficient security and that staffing data provided by CoreCivic could not be trusted.

This understaffing claim also central to the class-action diabetes lawsuit, which alleges that Trousdale is run by a skeleton crew. The lawsuit says that that Trousdale goes into lockdown, sometimes for weeks at a time, purely for manpower reasons because CoreCivic does not hire enough staff to secure the entire facility. Inmates are confined to their cells and can't visit exercise yard or the chow hall.

It is during these lockdowns, the lawsuit says, when diabetic care is the worst.

"Meals are provided at irregular and often unpredictable times and are often not diabetic appropriate despite medical directions for a diabetic appropriate diet," the lawsuit states. "At

such times, inmates are frequently forced to eat their meals and only then, sometimes two to three hours after eating, allowed to go for blood sugar checks or insulin injections.”

This allegation appears to have specifically resonated with the American Diabetes Association, which has filed a court motion in March to join the class-action lawsuit against Trousdale. In a news release earlier this year, the association said it hopes the lawsuit will set a standard for all CoreCivic facilities, and by extension, all prisons.

“Just as children depend on adults to assist with their diabetes care, individuals who are incarcerated are at the mercy of prison staff to provide them with access to the health care tools, medications and reasonable accommodations necessary to manage their diabetes,” said Sarah Fech-Baughman, an attorney for the American Diabetes Association, in a news release.

“These individuals do not have access to appropriate medical care and have been subjected to discrimination on the basis of their diabetes. The ADA challenges both of these issues on behalf of this vulnerable population.”

PRISONS: Beatings, broken bones and the death of Inmate No. 81738

MORE: Tennessee prison chief vows review of 'shocking' inmate death

Tennessean reporter Natalie Allison contributed to this report.

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POLITICS

Lawmakers hear from prison rape survivor, parents of man who hanged himself in CoreCivic facility

Natalie Allison The Tennessean

Published 12:23 p.m. CT Dec. 19, 2018 | Updated 5:04 p.m. CT Dec. 19, 2018

Edwin Steakley put on his coat and stepped out of the legislative hearing room, carrying with him a yellow envelope that contained his blood-stained boxers.

He sank to the hallway floor and wept with his head in his hands.

A former inmate at Trousdale Turner Correctional Center, 39-year-old Steakley had stood before a subcommittee of state senators and representatives Tuesday to tell them about his own traumatic experience of twice being raped at the facility operated by CoreCivic, a Nashville-based private, for-profit prison management company.

"Do you know what it feels like to have five grown men hold you down and rape you?" Steakley, who was released in April, said in public comments to the lawmakers at the hearing on the Tennessee Department of Correction.

"It is humiliating. It is disgusting."

Steakley became a target because he was Jewish, he told the lawmakers. He wrote to wardens, to lawmakers and others, but "nothing was done," he said.

"Where's the help we're supposed to get from the inside?" Steakley asked. "We look to y'all for our help, because y'all are our voice."

The USA TODAY NETWORK - Tennessee typically does not identify victims of sexual assault, but Steakley chose to tell his story publicly by speaking before the legislative committee.

In a statement, CoreCivic spokeswoman Amanda Gilchrist said the company was limited on what it could say about the rape allegations, but Trousdale Turner employees had complied

with Prison Rape Elimination Act requirements to report and investigate Steakley's claim and had notified the Department of Corrections.

Lawmakers hear testimony of inadequate staffing, lack of communication

The hearing, a follow-up on the department's progress following findings in a scathing 2017 performance audit, also drew family members of inmates who traveled from around the state to share their experiences with Tennessee's corrections system, which relies on CoreCivic to manage four of its 14 prisons.

The report released last fall noted that gangs and insufficient staffing plagued Trousdale Turner, the state's largest prison.

Bill and Teresa Anderson of Bradley County stood before the committee to talk about their 34-year-old son Ross, who was found hanging in his cell at Trousdale on Dec. 6. It was the third anniversary of his "psychotic breakdown," Bill Anderson said, when he fatally shot his girlfriend and her young daughter.

The prison chaplain called them 12 hours later to inform the couple of the death of their son, whom they say was suffering from severe mental illness and should have been in a psychiatric facility.

Ross Anderson had recently been threatened by a prison gang and had called his parents asking for \$200 to pay off someone for protection, his father said.

"All we know of his death after the chaplain's phone call is what we read in the newspaper," Anderson said, holding up an article clipping. "Calls to the warden, the family advocate and investigators have not been returned to any of us."

Sen. Mike Bell, R-Riceville, chairman of the Senate Committee on Government Operations, asked the couple — his constituents — what they believed led to their son's death.

"We believe a lack of oversight," Anderson said. "A lack of adequate staffing."

Ross Anderson had called the parents numerous times, he said, telling them his cell block was on lockdown because there weren't enough guards.

Following the 2017 audit, CoreCivic has increased starting salaries for officers. Staff turnover has been reduced by 24 percent since the audit, according to the private prison company.

TDOC commissioner Tony Parker said that while the starting salary for correctional officers at state-run prisons is \$27,000, CoreCivic's base salary at its facilities is now \$34,000.

On TDOC's follow-up audit this year, it scored Trousdale Turner at 95 percent

'When are we going to do something as a legislature and step up?'

A heated exchange erupted as Rep. Bo Mitchell, D-Nashville, reprimanded his colleagues for repeatedly failing to act after years of audits showing problems with CoreCivic-run facilities.

"When are we going to quit having citizens of the state come and tell stories like this and we aren't going to do anything?" Mitchell asked.

"When are we going to do something as a legislature and step up? We don't even make the people responsible come to the committee?"

Mitchell was referencing to CoreCivic's lack of representation at the meeting, despite hearing comments from Curt Campbell, program director of Christian reentry organization Men of Valor, that CoreCivic CEO Damon Hininger had attended a meeting with Campbell on Monday.

Hininger is on the board of Men of Valor, which has an agreement with CoreCivic to allow the nonprofit to work with inmates in its facilities. Gov.-elect Bill Lee is also a Men of Valor board member.

Mitchell also chastised Bell for cutting off Anderson's comments, which Bell had instructed the public to limit to three minutes.

"We tell them 'Your son's life is worth three minutes,'" Mitchell said. "I'm done, until somebody on this committee wants to step up. We're in a hurry here every time we come in here. This man has no answers whatsoever, ever."

Mitchell was pointing to TDOC commissioner Tony Parker, who had been speaking and answering questions about the department's progress.

"I felt bad, you were having to come in here and defend these people once again," Mitchell said to Parker, referring to his comments about CoreCivic.

"It's really hard to want to defend you when you come in here defending these people over and over and over again, knowing we have 20 years of findings in these audits that say the

exact same thing, but they have time to meet with Men of Valor yesterday. They have time to meet with the new governor. But they can't come in here and answer for their misdeeds of what all of these audits are full of."

'The punishment is going to prison'

Steakley, who was sentenced for theft, described how his life had "become a living hell" since he first went to Trousdale, where he was unsure if we would make it out alive.

"I had to pay for my crime," Steakley said. "I don't dispute that. Paying for my crime did not include sexual assault. It never included what I went through at Trousdale Turner. What happened to me should happen to no one else."

Rep. Mike Stewart, D-Nashville, pointed out that there was no record of a rape being reported at Trousdale Turner during the time period Steakley said the assault occurred, based on a summary document provided to him.

"This is something we would need to look into, obviously," Parker replied.

Rep. Jeremy Faison, R-Cosby, chairman of the House Committee on Government Operations, spoke out against the "cruel and unusual punishment" inmates like Steakley are subjected to inside prison walls.

"The punishment is going to prison," Faison said. "It is wrong and egregious for us as a body to allow a punishment to be inside of the punishment we've already given them."

As for the Andersons' testimony that they weren't informed about their son's death for 12 hours and have received no additional information since, Faison delivered a harsh rebuke to the department

"Shame on you, and shame on CoreCivic," Faison said, speaking to Parker. "Shame on everybody."

Gilchrist said the Trousdale Turner chaplain notified the Anderson family of Ross Anderson's death as soon as corrections representatives had completed their initial on-site investigation.

"I hope moving forward that we can get some type of dialogue between CoreCivic and y'all so that when something tragic like this takes place, that there's an immediate reach out to the family," Faison said. "It breaks my heart they find out more from the front page of the newspaper than they can from you or CoreCivic. That's egregious."

Reach Natalie Allison at nallison@tennessean.com. Follow her on Twitter at [@natalie_allison](https://twitter.com/natalie_allison).

NEWS

Private prison chief: 'We've got work to do' at Trousdale facility

Dave Boucher dboucher@tennessean.com

Published 1:49 p.m. CT Dec. 13, 2016

The rollout of Tennessee's newest private prison, the largest prison in the state, has not gone well, acknowledges CoreCivic CEO Damon Hininger.

"We've got work to do, clearly we've got work to do," said Hininger during a recent interview with The Tennessean, where Nashville-based company's recent rebranding from Corrections Corporation of America was also discussed.

"It's a very frequent occurrence when you're activating a facility, especially in a jurisdiction that maybe doesn't have a similar operation — public or private — and with that you've got workforce that is brand new to corrections, you're going to have some inconsistencies in the operations."

In the year since it has opened, the Trousdale Turner Correctional Center has been marred by safety and staffing concerns. Family of inmates and officers frequently say the facility has not done enough to ensure security. Officers say they're not getting paid enough to work in such conditions, leading to a consistent churn in the workforce.

All of those issues boiled over in May, when the Tennessee Department of Correction advised the facility stop accepting new inmates. A memo from state Correctional Administrator Tony Howerton outlined a litany of "serious issues" with facility leadership, along with concerns about the haphazard use of solitary confinement, inadequate staffing and allegations of excessive force. The facility also installed a new warden in March, swapping leaders with the CoreCivic-operated jail in Nashville.

DOJ to end CCA contracts, shares tumble

Hininger characterized the problems as "choppiness in the operations." Steve Owen, a spokesman for the company, said it's common for there to be "growing pains" and "hiccups" when opening a new private prison.

In letters, emails and conversations, families of inmates and officers have characterized the problems at the remote facility in Hartsville very differently.

James Kelley worked as a teacher at the facility from late November to early April. The 45-year-old has a master's degree and is licensed to teach in the state. He came to the facility after retiring from the military in 2011, having served for more than 21 years, including service in Desert Storm.

"I felt like I was in more danger when I was in the prison. And I didn't even have to think about that," Kelley told The Tennessean earlier this year.

"In a military environment, where I go out there and we're professionals, I have control over the battlefield aspects, I have control over the command aspects ... in the prison, it's completely opposite. There's no control and there's no identifying any immediate threats."

More than 800 staff vacancies in Tennessee prisons

This week, Kelley said there's a clear disconnect between company executives in their "ivory tower" in Nashville and the officers working the site every day.

Hininger and other CoreCivic executives admitted they need to work with the Department of Correction to review what went well with the rollout and what they need to improve.

"We both need to go back and do a post-mortem on it. We need to assess where we could have improved the process. We think that's a smart thing to do," said Tony Grande, chief development officer for CoreCivic and former Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development commissioner.

CCA announces ICE contract extension

The company underestimated the revolving door of employees, Hininger said. To help attract and keep officers, the company recently announced it would increase the starting officer pay to \$15.75 an hour. They plan to give raises to all employees hired in recently at lower rates.

But problems persist: the facility remained on lockdown from Nov. 24 through at least Friday, and was on lockdown during the Tennessean interview with CoreCivic executives. Lockdown means offenders remain in their cells unless going to work, attending programming like school or rehabilitation or going to visitation. However, family members consistently tell The Tennessean they have issues contacting their loved ones during lockdowns.

CoreCivic spokesman Jonathan Burns said the lockdown was part of a standard "security sweep."

The prison housed 2,434 inmates as of Nov. 30. The county has a five year, \$276 million contract to operate the facility, paid for by the state in a system in a pass through that skirts a Tennessee law which essentially mandates the state have only one private prison.

Reach Dave Boucher at 615-259-8892 and on Twitter @Dave_Boucher1.

Former chaplain describes conditions inside TN prison

REPORTED BY DEMETRIA KALODIMOS

POSTED JUN 19, 2017



Trousdale Turner Correctional Center (WSMV file photo)

By design, prisons are places shut off from the rest of society.

But the state's newest and largest prison is unlike any other. It's run by a private company with public money.

Lawmakers say they've been kept out. Volunteers say they've been turned away.

The Channel 4 I-Team was told months ago we would not be visiting the facility or interviewing anyone connected to the company, CoreCivic.

But some former employees and inmates' families are calling the new Trousdale Turner Correctional Facility the worst prison they have ever seen.

It's a challenge to tell the story of the Trousdale Turner Correctional Facility, when no one from the state or the prison will grant an interview or a tour of the facility.

The I-Team has relied on interviews with several current and former employees, lawmakers, advocates, and families members of those housed at the facility.

We have obtained internal documents and some public records we requested and were initially billed hundreds of dollars for, but only after many months of stonewalling by CoreCivic.

The stories the I-Team has heard consistently describe a prison severely understaffed and overrun with gangs, violence, drugs and inefficiency.

Families say medium security inmates, men who theoretically pose a moderate risk, have been locked down in cells for weeks without showers and sometimes food.

"These lockdowns didn't last for one or two days, they'd last for weeks and weeks and weeks," said Jacque Steubbel, a former chaplain at Trousdale. "And if you take that many men and put them in a pressure tank, you're going to have problems."

As a chaplain, Steubbel said she saw plenty of problems, and meticulously documented them.

A month into the job, Steubbel was told by an inmate that a half dozen sharp daggers were hidden in a ceiling.

"They would go up through an AC vent and unscrew part of the roof," she said. "And some of those shanks were this long, and they were selling them.

But the door was open for the same thing to happen again.

"When we left, they didn't lock the utility door back and the opening was still there," Steubbel said. "And I told the correctional officer this really needs to be secure, this area. They'll just go up into the ceiling."

That's just one example of what the former chaplain called lax security.

An incident report tells the story of an inmate who controlled all the keys to the educational offices and more, with the administrator's blessing.

"They found keys, TOMIS codes, other entry passwords and so forth in this inmate Joseph Brennan's cell," Steubbel said. "You could access the entire TDOC computer system. The teachers had to go to the inmate to get keys in education."

Steubbel didn't go to Trousedale with unrealistic expectations. She had been a prison chaplain at three other correctional facilities also run by CoreCivic.

Steubbel said she didn't intend to become a whistleblower. She said it became her duty, ethically and morally as a minister, to speak out.

"I had an inmate come to me and he had lost his tooth. He was in a lot of pain and was holding his tooth. He said, 'I can't get seen by a dentist,'" Steubbel said.

"He had tried for three days carrying his tooth around, and he was going to try to glue it back in with Super Glue. There for the grace of God could be one of us," she added.

A suicidal inmate was also discovered hanging in a cell.

"I heard on the radio, cut down tool immediately. And so I went to the cellblock myself, because cut down tool means there's a suicide," Steubbel said.

"They told me, 'You can't go in there, chaplain.' And I said, 'Yes I can.' And I went in there and here's a man hanging and they're spraying him with pepper spray," she added.

"I'm holding his hand and it's covered in pepper spray. And he happened to be Muslim. I said, 'Brother, I'm with you. You're not alone.' And he was covered with pepper spray and he was not a threat. I mean, when you're dangling like this, that's the response. Spray them," Steubbel said.

Excessive use of pepper spray at Trousedale was criticized by Tennessee Department of Correction officials shortly after the prison opened.

After seeing video of a disciplinary takedown, correctional administrator Tony Howerton wrote, "The inmate in my opinion was already compliant ... but he was sprayed."

Howerton called the action, “at minimum, unnecessary force ... but could be classified as excessive force.”

The I-Team asked to see that video, but CoreCivic refused, saying it would reveal too much about security.

But an internal memo obtained by the I-Team reveals some telling numbers. It shows Trousdale Turner Correctional Facility at the top of the list of Tennessee prisons when it comes to using chemical agents, with 102 incidents in a 10-month span. That is compared to seven at Riverbend Maximum Security Institution.

Riverbend holds just over 800 prisoners. Trousdale holds over 2,600.

The five highest numbers on the list where pepper spray was used the most are all places the state has entrusted to CoreCivic.

Apart from pepper spray, Steubbel said force was many times excessive and unforgettable.

“I heard there was a disturbance in one of the pods, and I looked through the entrance door and in the hallway, and this image will never leave my mind,” Steubbel said.

Steubbel said she saw two guards beating a prisoner who was on the floor.

“His hands were shackled behind his back, young African American man, hitting him and hitting him and hitting him over and over. And he was screaming, ‘Stop,’” Steubbel said.

“That’s not right, it’s not necessary. And I will never get that image out of my mind,” she said.

In the small town of Hartsville, where the prison pays the biggest tax bill, Trousdale County Mayor Carroll Carman said the problems are news to him.

“You can count the number of calls my office has received in these fingers right here. It’s hidden primarily in our county and no one thinks about it,” Carman said.

Steubbel no longer works at Trousdale or for CoreCivic. The company said she was fired “for cause” after what they referred to as an investigation that “substantiated misconduct.”

The company claimed she was “providing misleading information to investigators” and now has a motive to “impugn our company.”

Prior to our interview, Steubbel told the I-Team she was terminated by CoreCivic based on what she claimed were false allegations from an incident at her previous post in Texas. She provided documentation of her claims.

She also shared an unemployment determination that awarded her compensation, charged to CoreCivic, with a finding that her employer fired her for a “reason that was not misconduct connected with the work.”

After charging the I-Team more than \$200 for copying those public records, CoreCivic returned that check, but not others, saying our request didn’t take as many man hours as anticipated.

The I-Team has been investigating claims at Trousdale Turner Correctional Facility since early last summer. Whenever new reports of assault, deaths and other disturbances surfaced, we have asked for incident reports, photos, videos and answers to questions.

Our most recent request was on June 1. No photos or videos have ever been shared.

The I-Team has not yet received the batch of records we requested in late March.

A state representative and the I-Team repeatedly asked for access to the facility or in-person interviews, and those requests were denied.

While the company offered a media tour on a short notice in April, it was at a time when Demetria Kalodimos was on assignment out of state. We asked to reschedule, and CoreCivic has yet to do that.

Late last week, CoreCivic responded to some of our long-pending questions, saying in part medical privacy considerations precluded them from providing details on deaths or injuries. They also generically stated that their staff acted appropriately in all situations.

Watch Channel 4 News at 6:00 on Tuesday for more on the many calls to 911 and why several employees said “no one is allowed to die at a CoreCivic prison.”

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NEWS

Former chaplain describes conditions inside TN prison

Posted Jun 19, 2017

https://www.lebanondemocrat.com/hartsville/trousdale-turner-employee-charged-with-smuggling-contraband/article_6b865daf-fbc8-5a59-9a35-e84b61ace2e4.html

Trousdale Turner employee charged with smuggling contraband

By Chris Gregory Managing Editor

Apr 23, 2020



Shinitara Kemp

An employee at the Trousdale Turner Correctional Center was arrested Friday and charged with attempting to introduce contraband to the CoreCivic-owned prison.

Shinitara Neikia Kemp, 34, of Clarksdale, Miss., was arrested after arriving for work at the prison early on the morning of April 17. She was reportedly a correctional officer brought in for temporary duty from another CoreCivic facility.

Arrest affidavits obtained by The Vidette stated that during a patdown of Kemp, security personnel found a package in her pants pocket. Three similar packages were reportedly found in a restroom that Kemp had exited as well.

The Trousdale County Sheriff's Department was called and opened the packages, which allegedly contained 14.75 ounces of marijuana. Kemp reportedly told investigators she was being paid \$2,000 by an inmate, identified as David Von Brown, to bring the contraband into the prison.

Kemp's vehicle was searched and a loaded 9mm pistol was reportedly discovered.

CoreCivic spokesman Ryan Gustin issued the following statement: "On Friday, April 17, Correctional Officer Shinitara Kemp was caught at checkpoint attempting to introduce drugs into the Trousdale Turner Correctional Center. This incident was immediately reported to the Trousdale County Sheriff's Department (TCSD) and our government partner, Tennessee Department of Correction. TCSD responded to the facility and arrested this individual for attempted introduction of contraband into a correctional facility. A search of the individual's vehicle, incident to arrest, resulted in the discovery of a weapon.

"We are cooperating fully with the investigation and the arrested individual's employment has been terminated.

"CoreCivic has a zero-tolerance policy for the introduction of contraband into our facilities and our actions in this matter reflect that."

Kemp was charged with attempting to introduce contraband to a penal facility, possession of Schedule VI for resale, unlawful drug paraphernalia and possession of a weapon during a felony.

Kemp was booked into the Trousdale County Jail and released on \$41,500 bond. She is scheduled to appear in general sessions court on June 12.

Reach Chris Gregory at 615-374-3556 or cgregory@hartsvillevidette.com.

NEWS

Prison corrections officer in Trousdale County arrested carrying drugs

by: [Andy Cordan](#)

Posted: Jan 20, 2021 / 04:15 PM CST / Updated: Jan 20, 2021 / 05:02 PM CST

TROUSDALE COUNTY, Tenn. (WKRN) – A CoreCivic corrections officer is under investigation after he was on his way to the prison in Trousdale County with drugs on his person

Officer: Do me a favor. Step out of the car for a minute, I need to take a look at your eyeballs.

When the 32-year-old corrections officer protested, the officer made the following statement.

Officer: Listen, if I am going to let you get back on the road and drive, I have to make sure you are sober.

The officer examined the driver's eyes and then made another statement.

Officer: You might not be drunk, but you are intoxicated. What did you take?

Blayde: Nothing.

Officer: Nothing?

Blayde was wearing his corrections uniform as he told police he doesn't doesn't drink or smoke.

Blayde: I swear on my granddaddy, I don't drink or smoke. I don't do none of that.

Officer: Did you take any prescription medication?

Blayde: No, all I maybe took was an Advil. I don't do no drugs sir.

Body cam then shows Blayde performing poorly on his field sobriety tests and police arrest him for DUI.

Blayde: But I'm not drunk though, bro!

Captain Ray Amalfitano says, "He failed miserably."

According to CoreCivic, Blayde started his job on November 16, 2020.

Capt. Ray Amalfitano said, “What comes to mind is, you are in that profession, and held to a higher standard, and what do you even have that on you for? Are you trying to get that smuggled in, to get it to people locked up on the inside?”

CoreCivic issued the following statement:

CoreCivic has a zero tolerance policy for the introduction of contraband into our facilities.

The incident was immediately reported to our partners at the Tennessee Department of Corrections and the Office of Investigation and Compliance (OIC) is investigating the circumstance of his arrest.

- CORECIVIC

Officials with CoreCivic confirmed that Joseph Blayde Jr. is on administrative leave pending the outcome of the investigation.

Jail officials confirm Blayde Jr. is out of jail on a \$20,000 bond.

He is due in court on April 20th.

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POLITICS

Gangs, insufficient staffing plague troubled Tennessee private prison, state audit finds

Dave Boucher The Tennessean

Published 9:10 a.m. CT Nov. 14, 2017 | Updated 4:40 p.m. CT Nov. 14, 2017

Staffing and vacancy data at the largest private prison in Tennessee cannot be trusted, according to a scathing state audit that raises new questions about oversight of a quarter-billion dollar contract.

The audit, released Tuesday, blasted prison operator CoreCivic, previously known as Corrections Corporation of America, for ongoing problems at the Trousdale Turner Correctional Center, the newest and largest prison in the state.

"Trousdale Turner Correctional Center management's continued noncompliance with contract requirements and department policies challenges the department's ability to effectively monitor the private prison," the audit states.

Related:

► **New Tennessee CCA prison stops taking inmates amid 'serious issues'**

► **Private prison chief: 'We've got work to do' at Trousdale facility**

Tennessee House Democratic leaders, frequent critics of private prisons and advocates for additional prison oversight, pounced on the audit findings. House Minority leader Mike Stewart, D-Nashville, said he would support a legislative procedural move to delay department operations until the audit findings are addressed.

"Today we have explosive findings. Clearly we have CoreCivic facilities that are a powder keg waiting to explode, potentially endangering the public," Stewart said.

"Clearly, the Department of Correction has not been doing its job supervising this contractor, and we have to have a separate, independent agency come in and find these problems."

The Tennessee State Employee Association, an organization that represents prison officers and other state workers, pointed to the audit findings to renew its call for Tennessee to end using private prisons.

"In light of these findings, we believe it is time to move on from this and all private prison contracts and operate all Tennessee state prison facilities with state employees who have proven their ability to effectively maintain and operate safe and secure prisons," said TSEA Executive Director Randy Stamps in a statment Tuesday afternoon

While the audit did find some issues within state-run probation and parole operations — and auditors have previously blasted state-run facilities for many different problems — this audit focused almost exclusively on private prison issues.

The stock market reacted to the news as well. CoreCivic shareprices dropped almost 6 percent, closing the day down \$1.45 to \$22.92, the lowest price all year.

A CoreCivic spokeswoman acknowledged previous challenges at the facility and said "we still have work to do" but said the company has made progress since the prison opened.

"For example, we've significantly increased pay to attract and retain employees, with the starting salary at Trousdale now more than \$16 per hour," spokeswoman Amanda Gilchrist said in an email Tuesday afternoon. She said the firm is awaiting the results of a follow-up audit.

Department spokeswoman Neysa Taylor issued a similar statement Tuesday afternoon.

"We continue to work closely with our government and other partners, and are confident in the progress we have made and the services which are provided," Taylor said.

Gang activity cited as problem

Advocates, inmates, officers and their families have long said the facility is overly dangerous. A former employee previously told USA TODAY NETWORK-Tennessee he felt less safe in Trousdale than he did during his two decades in the Army, which included a deployment during Desert Storm.

Part of that problem is a large number of gang-affiliated inmates, advocates and families have said.

"Wardens at other facilities asked to transfer inmates to Trousdale Turner might move those with disciplinary issues, inmate compatibility issues, or security threat group (gang) affiliation," the audit states.

"When we visited Trousdale Turner, the department was in the process of transferring approximately 40 inmates per day in and out of the facility to reduce the percentage of confirmed gang-affiliated inmates at the facility."

Although many of these potentially problematic inmates may have higher security restrictions, Trousdale is classified as a medium-security prison.

At the time Trousdale opened, West Tennessee State Penitentiary was in the midst of ongoing violent episodes. Advocates, inmates and other sources say potentially dangerous inmates from that prison and other large prisons were transferred to Trousdale.

'Instability in leadership' and staffing questions concern auditors

The audit reviewed staffing and additional documentation for Trousdale, Whiteville Correctional Center and Hardeman County Correctional Center. All of the three CoreCivic-run facilities had issues, but Trousdale's were consistently the most egregious.

"A sample of 3 different days in 3 months revealed 44 critical posts unstaffed. We might have identified more unstaffed posts, but our review was limited by the blank staffing rosters," the audit states, referencing Trousdale staffing reports.

CoreCivic has a five-year, \$276 million contract to operate the facility. Although state law essentially allows for only one private prison, the department is using Trousdale County as something of a pass-through: Trousdale pays the money to CoreCivic after receiving the money from the state.

The roughly two-year-old facility has been plagued by problems since it opened. In the first months of operation, Trousdale was forced to stop accepting new inmates by the Tennessee Department of Correction due to a litany of issues.

The audit notes some issues may be due to "instability in leadership," observing Trousdale is on its third warden since opening.

Every private prison in Tennessee operates with a state employee called a contract monitor. The contract monitor is in place to watch daily operations to ensure CoreCivic is living up to

contract obligations.

During a recent media tour of CoreCivic, the warden noted that the facility has a contract monitor as evidence there is constant oversight at the facility.

But the audit found errors by contract monitors at several facilities, and said department cuts have forced those monitors to have too many job responsibilities.

Although CoreCivic officials say they have made improvements, auditors said inmates could be in danger.

"While the department's contract monitoring efforts regularly report the facility's shortcomings, cuts in monitoring staff may have reduced the department's ability to effectively monitor key contract requirements," the audit states.

"This lack of effective monitoring has resulted in situations that may undermine the department's ability to achieve its stated mission and could result in harm to inmates."

This points to willful negligence or sloppy operations by the department, Stewart said.

"If they're not able to do what they're asked to do then we have a systemic problem. I don't know what the motivation is. What I know is we have a department that has either been incapable of doing its job properly or has elected not to do its job properly," Stewart said.

What happens next?

The department agreed with most of the audit findings, but objected to accusations staffing data is inconsistent or potentially inaccurate.

"The Department of Correction works daily with CoreCivic to support consistent staffing patterns and gives thoughtful consideration to any proposed staffing changes," the management response states.

The audit will be addressed Wednesday morning during a meeting known as a "sunset hearing." Every year, the state legislature reauthorizes every state department, a process that in theory allows for oversight of operations.

While Stewart and Nashville Democrat Bo Mitchell say they will oppose recertification, the effort is almost assured to fail. Moreover, even if the department were not recertified, that would open the door to privatizing the entire system, a move Democrats oppose.

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Tennessean.

NEWS

'This is unreal': Family seeks answers in death of Trousdale Turner prison inmate

Keith Sharon and Adam Tamburin Nashville Tennessean

Published 9:30 p.m. CT Feb. 2, 2021

The mortician had to reconstruct the victim's face so his family could mourn him with an open casket at his funeral.

Six weeks after Aaron Blayke Adams was found dead at Trousdale Turner Correctional Center, his family still doesn't know who is responsible, even though they say the 29-year-old inmate was in protective custody while being held on a probation violation at the time he died.

"They had to rebuild his jaw and his face and put a wig on him," said a distraught Deborah Henson, of Pine Bluff, Ark., the grandmother who raised Adams, who went by Blayke.

Despite sometimes daily phone calls to authorities, Henson said the family has no idea how Adams could have died or who may have killed him.

The family has attempted to get details from the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, the Hartsville District Attorney's Office, the medical examiner and prison officials, but so far they have been denied.

The Tennessee Department of Correction told The Tennessean his death is being investigated as a homicide. The investigation is ongoing; Carter said the case could result in charges against an inmate.

'I'm so scared in here'

Adams, who was taken to Trousdale in May 2018, was scheduled to be released the day after Christmas, she said. Department of Correction spokesperson Dorinda Carter said state records show Adams' sentence would have expired October 2022.

Henson said Adams told her in a November phone call his life was in danger and that other inmates had "jumped" him and broken his ribs.

"He told me, 'You've got to get me out of here,'" said Henson, whose grandson called her Gaga. "Every time he called me, he would say, 'Gaga, I'm so scared in here.'"

Henson has focused her anger on the prison.

"This is unreal," she said. "That place needs to be shut down."

Prison officials declined to answer questions about Adams' death, saying only that staff "discovered" him unresponsive at 2:07 a.m. on Dec. 17. First responders tried to render life-saving aid, but Adams was declared dead at the prison, according to Ryan Gustin, a spokesperson for CoreCivic, the company that runs Trousdale Turner.

Officials would not say if any action had been taken against other inmates or prison officers. Gustin said "Trousdale Turner staff are cooperating fully" with a state investigation. He referred questions to the state.

The Tennessee Department of Correction Office of Investigations and Conduct is investigating Adams' death as a homicide, Carter said. Investigators will share their findings with the local district attorney's office.

Adams was not a violent offender.

Adams' criminal history in Tennessee dates to 2009, when he was arrested two days after his 18th birthday on a charge of criminal impersonation, according to state records.

A series of arrests followed for theft, drug possession, simple assault and probation violation, among other charges. His last arrests, in 2017, were on charges of probation violation and theft, according to state records.

His grandmother said his last arrest was for leaving the jurisdiction of his probation.

Problems at Trousdale Turner

Adams' death raises new questions about conditions at Trousdale Turner, a state prison managed by the private contractor CoreCivic. The facility has been roiled by safety and staffing concerns since it opened in 2016.

"The latest homicide fits a long and consistent pattern, as does the lack of response and accountability," said Jeannie Alexander, director of the Nashville-based No Exceptions Prison Collective and a long-time critic of conditions at Trousdale Turner.

"Trousdale Turner is hell for the people forced to live behind its walls, and hell for the people who work there," Alexander said. "And yet our state government chooses to ignore that people's children, loved ones, and family members are traumatized and subjected to violence on a daily basis."

Families complained for years of shoddy security at the facility. Those concerns mirror widespread problems reported throughout the state prison system.

A December 2019 audit found prisons across the state were mismanaged. The audit singled Trousdale Turner out for its poor record keeping related to inmate and employee safety.

For instance, health staff at Trousdale Turner failed to record any serious accidents or injuries during the 1½-year audit period. State auditors deemed the dearth of records suspicious.

"Given the nature of the correctional environment and when compared to other correctional facilities, it is unlikely that a facility would have no serious incidents to report," the auditors wrote.

Auditors also found staff at Trousdale Turner failed to file timely reports about sexual abuse and harassment allegations.

Then, last May, Trousdale Turner was the site of one of the biggest COVID-19 prison outbreaks in the country. The state said more than half of the inmates and staff tested at Trousdale Turner tested positive for the virus.

Adams is one of 25 inmates who died at Trousdale Turner in 2020. His is one of two deaths classified as a homicide in that timeframe, according to state records.

The other Trousdale Turner inmate to die in a homicide, Frank Lundy, was killed in January 2020 during a fight between inmates, officials said. Prison staff found Lundy injured "at the entrance to the housing unit." He was rushed to a local hospital, where he was declared dead.

Henson said she was very close with grandson. She said Adams told her he worked in the kitchen and he cut weeds at the prison for 15 cents per day.

She said he was in "medium security."

In 2020, Henson said she bought Adams a television to watch in his cell. Shortly after, she said he called her to say that the television had been stolen and that he and his cell mate had been beaten by other inmates.

She said she wants to know name of the person who killed Adams.

"I want to make sure this guy doesn't get out and come after us," Henson said.

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NEWS

Investigation underway following death of inmate at Trousdale Turner Correctional Center

by: [Alex Corradetti](#)

Posted: Sep 8, 2021 / 10:45 AM CDT

Updated: Sep 8, 2021 / 12:19 PM CDT

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TROUSDALE COUNTY, Tenn. (WKRN) – The Tennessee Department of Correction’s Office of Investigations is looking into the death of an inmate at the Trousdale Turner Correctional Center.

According to the Director of Public Affairs for CoreCivic, an inmate was found unresponsive around 6:12 p.m. Tuesday at the facility.

Case 3:21-cv-02093 Document 1-61 Filed 02/10/22 Page 13 of 34 Page 13 of 34



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Staff called a medical emergency and responded immediately. They began performing emergency life-saving measures. EMS were requested but the inmate was pronounced deceased before EMS arrived.

Facility administrators informed TDOC's Office of Investigations and Conduct and are looking into the incident. The inmate has yet to be identified and no other information was immediately released.

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https://www.lebanondemocrat.com/hartsville/former-trousdale-turner-corrections-officer-indicted/article_aac20d8d-16e5-5edc-9e7e-d5fd9f8bfd0e.html

Former Trousdale Turner corrections officer indicted

By Chris Gregory Managing Editor
Oct 7, 2021

A former corrections officer at the Trousdale Turner Correctional Center has been indicted by a federal grand jury on various charges.

A press release from the Department of Justice stated that Kenan Lister, 42, was indicted after allegedly assaulting an inmate at the Hartsville prison on Aug. 30, 2019. He was arrested by FBI agents at his Clarksville home on Tuesday morning and was scheduled to appear before a U.S. magistrate later Tuesday.

The victim was not identified but sources told *The Vidette* it is Robert King Vaughn Jr., who allegedly assaulted a TTCC staff member earlier that same day. Vaughn was indicted by the Trousdale County Grand Jury in December 2020 on charges of attempted first-degree murder and aggravated rape, and those charges are still pending.

Loki's time has come

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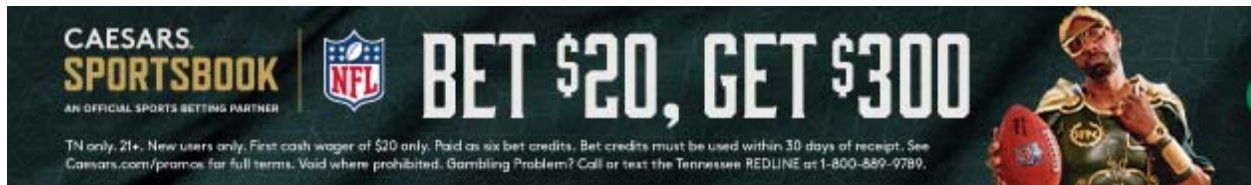
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According to the DOJ, Lister allegedly "punched the inmate in the head, knocking him to the ground, and then kicked, punched and struck the inmate multiple times in his head, chest and torso after he was on the ground." The DOJ release also claims that Lister failed to make notifications to get the inmate medical care and submitted a false report that omitted his use of force on the victim.

The case was investigated by the FBI and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Sara

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"The safety of our staff and the inmates entrusted to our care is our top priority, and we have a zero-tolerance policy for any form of violence against inmates," stated Ryan Gustin, Public Affairs Director for CoreCivic. "The employee in question was terminated immediately following the incident, and we cooperated fully with the investigation."



✂

Lister is charged with one count of deprivation of right under color of law, one count of being deliberately indifferent to the inmate's medical needs and one count of obstructing justice.

If convicted, Lister could face up to 20 years in prison, as well as a maximum of three years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000.

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NEWS



NAACP calls for closure of Trousdale Turner Correctional Center, cites 'barbaric treatment' of Black men

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Case 3:22-cv-00269 Document 1-1 Filed 02/10/22 Page 13 of 37

The Nashville branch of the NAACP is calling for the closure of the Trousdale Turner Correctional Center citing its “barbaric treatment” of African American men.



By: [Levi Ismail](#)

Posted at 1:45 PM, Nov 11, 2021 and last updated 7:10 PM, Nov 11, 2021

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (WTVF) — The Nashville branch of the NAACP is calling for the closure of the Trousdale Turner Correctional Center citing its "barbaric treatment" of African American men.

The NAACP called for the private prison's closure during a news briefing, Thursday. The organization also called for the state and U.S. Department of Justice to investigate Trousdale Turner's treatment of Black men.

Watch the full press conference below:

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NAACP Nashville President Sheryl Guinn said they have received an "inordinate" amount of complaints about Trousdale Turner, which has alarmed them.

Guinn said they have gotten reports detailing the "brutal" treatment of inmates, the majority of whom are Black men. She said they have also heard disturbing reports of guards beating inmates until they are "bloody" and inmates not receiving adequate medical care — and in some cases being denied medical care.

The same guards allegedly used racist remarks while beating inmates. Once an inmate spoke out to prison staff, guards are reprimanded. Guards are then suspected of paying gang members to finish the beatings as a form of

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correctional facility.

Gilmore said she's not opposed to introducing legislation to cut ties with for-profit prison companies. That begins with an investigation on both the state and federal level.

"The bottom line with CoreCivic is money. So I think that they're taking shortcuts and as a result of them taking shortcuts and being understaffed, these prisoners are being treated less than human," Gilmore said.

We also heard from Martha Carter who spoke about her still incarcerated son. She says he was diagnosed with blood cancer after complaining about his injuries that were never properly treated.

A tearful Carter said she thinks about her son every day and says it's time an investigation brought an end to the facility.

"We think about him all the time. That he's alone and sick. They won't give him special care or help," Carter said.

Members of the NAACP said they have not heard back from CoreCivic. We contacted the company and they offered the following statement:

"These unsubstantiated claims are inaccurate and misinformed. In both policy and practice, CoreCivic respects the dignity of every individual entrusted to our care, and we take any claims to the contrary seriously. We have clear lines of communication for those in our care to make concerns known. These concerns can be shared without fear of repercussion. Channels include in-facility

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inmate rights and treatment including legal rights, safety and security, healthcare, reentry programming, visitation and standards of living. We train 100% of our professionals on this policy before their first day of work.

Trousdale Turner Correctional Center (TTCC) provides those in our care comprehensive medical and mental health care. TTCC is monitored very closely by our government partners at the Tennessee Department of Correction (TDOC) who employ two, full-time on-site contract monitors at TTCC that work to ensure our full compliance with prescribed policies and procedures. TDOC also conducts regular reviews and audits of the entire facility to ensure appropriate standard of living for all inmates."

Members of the NAACP says they've heard back from the Department of Justice who have heard a number of these complaints against the facility. They say there have been several calls from inmates over the past year, but the DOJ has not confirmed an investigation.

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